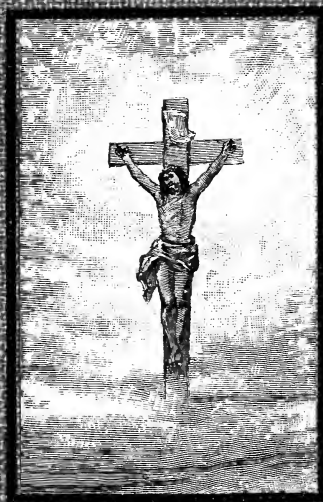


THE LOVER'S LOVE
OR
JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN



FEARCE



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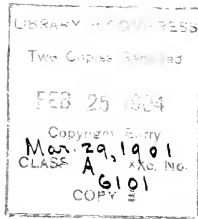
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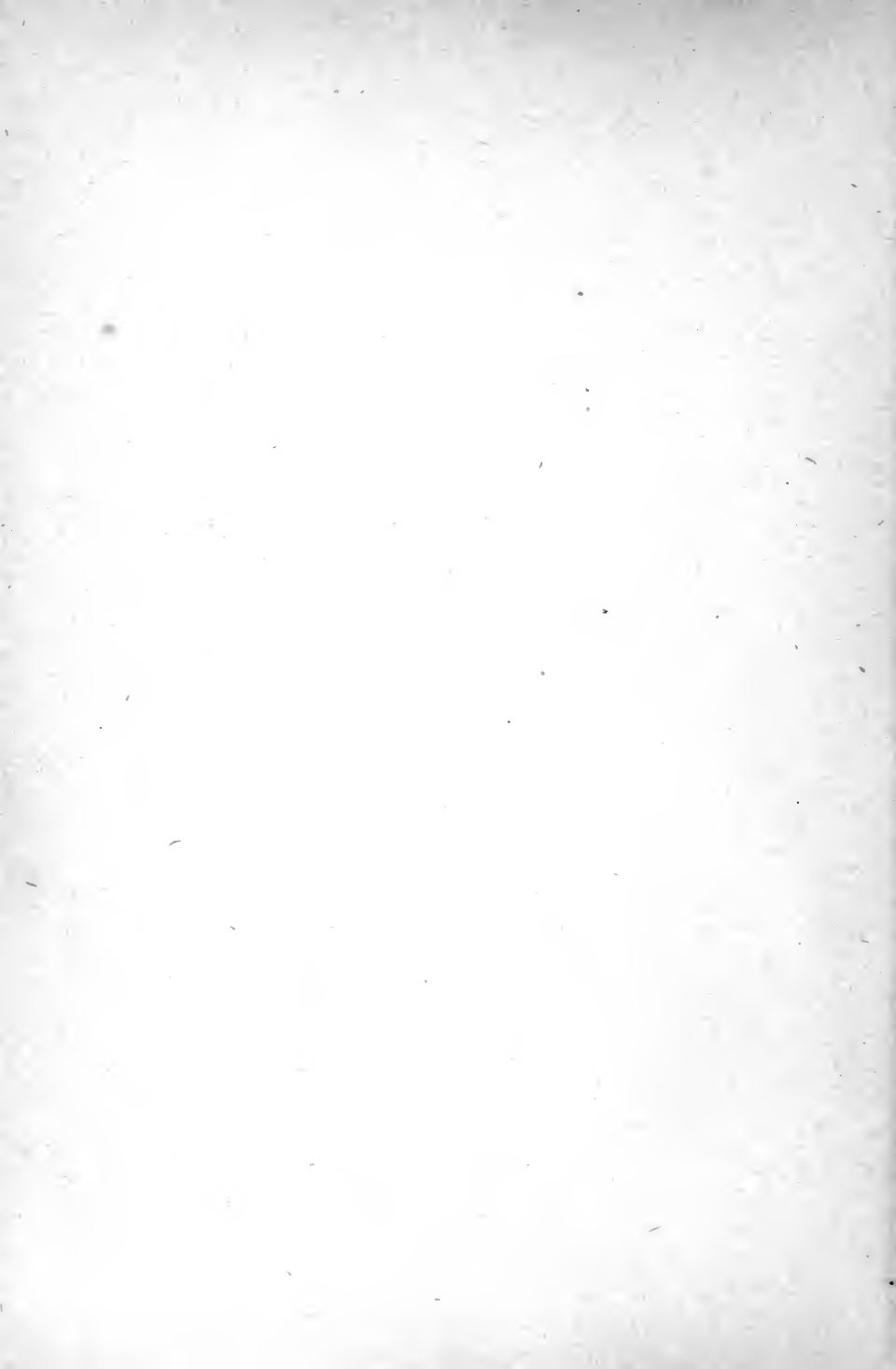
DEDICATORY

*To her, who by example and instruction has
led me to know and appreciate
more the love of God—*

My Wife

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

“If and Why,” “The Tabernacle,” “The Master’s
Greatest Monosyllables,” “Stepping-stones
to Manhood,” etc.



PREFACE

HELEN KELLER, the blind, deaf, and dumb girl, of whose intelligence and remarkable beauty of character so much is said, not long ago entertained a company of eight persons, all of whom had taken some part in the preparation of her autobiography, "The Story of My Life."

At the plate of each guest was a copy of the book, with a few words of dedication in Miss Keller's handwriting. To one who had read the proofs she wrote, "The proof of the book is in the reading."

May not the same be said of "The Lover's Love"? Some who heard these truths spoken from the pulpit were led to a higher conception of what life in Christ means: may not others gain the same blessing by reading?

The author is not unconscious of inability in pursuing a line of thought in which "angels might well fear to tread;" yet he is conscious that if these pages are read with a

PREFACE

spirit, good will be derived therefrom. May God bless the book, and may it be in His hands the means of leading many who now spurn His love to accept it.

“Jesus, may all confess Thy name,
Thy wondrous love adore;
And, seeking Thee, themselves inflame
To seek Thee more and more.”

WILLIAM P. PEARCE.

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INTRODUCTION

“THE LOVER’S LOVE” will prove a blessing to many readers. If there was nothing more than the text from which it grew, it would be worth while to read that, but it is the exposition and experience of one whom God has greatly used and blest.

Luther said John three-sixteen was the gospel in a *nutshell*.

Some one else has said that if all the rest of the Bible should be lost, this one text would preserve our knowledge of God’s love in the gift of His Son.

This is the second introduction I have written for this same subject; the manuscript of the first was destroyed by fire.

May this second writing kindle many fires of devotion and service in the hearts of God’s children. I count it a pleasure to have any part in the sending out of “The Lover’s Love.”

J. WILBUR CHAPMAN.

New York City.

LOVE COUNTETH NOT THE COST

THERE is an ancient story, simply told,
As ever were the holy things of old,
Of one who served through many a toiling year
To earn at last the joy he held most dear,—
A weary term, to others, strangely lost.
What mattered it? *Love counteth not the cost!*

Yet not alone beneath far Eastern skies
The faithful life hath, patient, won its prize;
Whenever hearts beat high, and brave hopes swell
The soul, some Rachel waits beside the well:
For her the load is borne, the desert crossed.
What matters it? *Love counteth not the cost!*

This, then, of man: and what, dear Lord, of Thee,
Bowed in the midnight of Gethsemane —
Come from those regions infinite with peace,
To buy with such a price the world's release!
Thy voice descends, through ages tempest-tossed,
“What matters it? *Love counteth not the cost!*”

O Christ, Redeemer, Master! I, who stand
Beneath the pressure of Thy gracious hand —
What is the service Thou wouldst have from me?
What is the burden to be borne for Thee?
I, too, would say, though care and fear exhaust,
“What matters it? *Love counteth not the cost!*”

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

IT is a pathetic story culled from a book given to the writer for his mother, when that mother lay on her death-bed. Doubtless it will aid in impressing the title of this small volume on the mind of the reader. In a large city there lived a poor homeless and friendless boy, who had become the associate of thieves. One night a burglary had been planned, and this boy was to watch, and give the warning should the robbers be detected. It happened that the night was bright with the light of the moon, which cast a shadow on his path as he hid behind the portico of the house. Before he hardly realized it, he was accosted by a man, who said, "Boy! what are you doing here so late? Go home, and go to bed; lads like you have no business in the street at such an hour. Go home!" he repeated, as the boy did not move.

"I have no home to go to, and no bed," replied the young street Arab, and his voice trembled.

THE LOVER'S LOVE

"Poor fellow," said the stranger, compassionately; "would you go to a home and a bed if I gave them to you?"

"That I would, gladly," replied the boy, as the cold wind struck his shivering body.

The full light fell on the face of a gentleman, revealing a kindly smile, which shone brighter than the moonlight on the heart of the wanderer. He gave the name of a street and number, and the lad was hurrying off, when the gentleman recalled him.

"But how are you going to get in, my boy? You must have a pass-ticket, as well as an invitation, before you are admitted. Take this; this is for you. Can you read?"

"No," replied the lad, sadly; "I never learned."

"Well, remember on this ticket is 'John Three-Sixteen.' Repeat it after me: 'John Three-Sixteen.'" The boy eagerly repeated the words.

"Now do not forget," said the stranger, "this is to give you a home and a bed, and to do you good."

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

Off ran the lad with his ticket, repeating the words until he arrived at the street door of the house indicated to him. He rang the bell fearlessly,— for had not that kind friend told him that John Three-Sixteen would secure him a home and a bed? The night-porter opened the door, and in a gruff voice inquired: “Who’s there?”

“It’s me, please,” gasped the boy; “please, sir, I’m *John Three-Sixteen*.”

“All right!” responded the porter; “that’s the pass for to-night. Come in.”

The poor lad soon found himself in a comfortable bed, his heart running over with gratitude for the shelter not only from the cold wind, but from his evil companions; and again and again he repeated: “I’ll always be John Three-Sixteen — it’s so lucky.”

He slept soundly till morning, when he reluctantly left the place which had afforded him rest, food, and shelter solely on the strength of his new name. As he was crossing the street, he was knocked down by a passing cab, and being hurt, was carried to the nearest

THE LOVER'S LOVE

hospital. Before he was taken into the ward, he was asked, "Are you a Protestant or a Romanist?" He did not understand what the question meant, so he replied, "I'm John Three-Sixteen."

"Well," said the warden to the attendant, "he's badly hurt; carry him in—*John Three-Sixteen*, or whatever his name is. Poor lad! poor lad!"

In the accident ward he was laid tenderly down, and soon the surgeon came, and bound up his wounds. Fever set in, and delirium followed; but at intervals, all that night, he repeated: "John Three-Sixteen, John Three-Sixteen. It was to do me good, and so it has."

Many a one in the ward, wakened by that ceaseless cry, stretched forth a feeble hand to turn the leaves of the Testament by his side, to learn, if possible, what the continued repetition of the text meant. The Holy Spirit blessed it that night to several souls; for it was God's own word, and He has promised that His word shall not return unto Him void.

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

One day the lad awoke to new life. As he gazed about him, half dazed, a patient from one of the beds near him said, "John Three-Sixteen, how are you?"

"How do you know my name?" inquired the lad.

"Know it! Why, you have never ceased telling us of it; and I, for one, say, '*Blessed John Three-Sixteen.*'" The boy marveled to hear himself called blessed, and then for the first time in his life he heard those life-giving words that have brought salvation to thousands: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Some time after this an elderly man was brought into the same ward in a dying condition. Many came and went, ministering to him, but from his bed only groans were heard. "I'll just try my password," said the lad. "I found it lucky for a bed, and now I have found it good for a home for everlasting. Poor fellow, perhaps *he'll* find it lucky, too."

THE LOVER'S LOVE

Then, in a solemn tone, with emphasis on every word, the boy repeated: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

There was deep silence in the ward while this young missionary gave forth the message of salvation. Hope dawned on the face of the death-stricken man, who implored that the words be repeated. The Holy Spirit aided the reading, and gave peace to the despairing soul, so that he accepted Christ, the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."¹

The boy did not die, but lived to declare the love of God to others. He made John three-sixteen the comfort of his life, the keynote of his talks, and the assurance of that "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."² May the thoughts set forth in this book do the same for every one who reads them. As the sun is the center of the universe, so the love of God, as ex-

¹ John 1: 29.

² 1 Peter 1: 4.

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

pressed in John three-sixteen, is the center of every chapter in the book. If love is "the greatest thing in the world," then is it also the most enduring.

"They sin who tell us love can die ;
With life all other passions fly,
All others are but vanity.
Earthly these passions of the earth,
They perish where they had their birth ;
But love is indestructible.
Its holy flame forever burneth,
From heaven it came, to heaven returneth.
Too oft on earth a troubled guest,
At times deceived, at times opprest,
It here is tried and purified,
Then hath in heaven its perfect rest.
It soweth here with toil and care,
But the harvest time of love is there."

I

THE LOVER — "GOD"

No other verse of such beauty and significance can be found in the Bible as John three-sixteen. It is the fadeless, priceless gem of the Scriptures; the key-stone in the variegated rainbow-arch of God's loving providences; the east star in the constellation of divine virtues; the flower from whose chalice have come all the sweets of Christianity. In one sentence of Luther's, it is "the gospel in miniature," from which all the attributes of God diverge, and in which all our happiness and hope converge.

"The balm of life, the cure of woe,
The measure and the pledge of love,
The sinners' refuge here below,
The angels' theme in heaven above."

Strange that Andrew Fuller, the most versatile writer and preacher of his day, was twenty years in making up his mind to preach

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

from this verse! What was the reason? Too old a subject? — None older. Too full of pathos? — None fuller. Too deep a mystery? None deeper. Too great a theme? — None greater. It incorporates the divine plan of redemption from the beginning; around it revolves the whole system of Biblical doctrines; and according to one's attitude toward it depend the salvation and destiny of the soul.

“Eloquent orators,” says Dr. Hillis, “do not discuss petty themes. The woes of India lent eloquence to Burke. Paradise lent beauty and strength to Milton. The Madonna lent loveliness to the brush of Raphael.” So has John three-sixteen given relief to sin-burdened hearts; furnished a theme inexhaustible to the pen; imparted sweetness and power to the tongue; filled men with holy zeal to consecrate themselves for service or sacrifice; quieted the fears of the dying; and, separating the veil between time and eternity, given a glimpse of immortal blessedness.

When asked to give a lecture on fishes, the

THE LOVER'S LOVE

renowned scientist, Professor Agassiz, declined to undertake so great a task. He proposed, however, to give a course of lectures on a *fish scale*. There being so much connected with it, he deemed it advisable to make it the theme of his discourses.

The Bible is a wide field for investigation along all lines,—historical, geographical, poetical, prophetic, and doctrinal. But in John three-sixteen is centralized the greatest attribute of divinity, and around it all others revolve,—an attribute which angels have studied for ages, on which preachers have built their sermons, poets their poems, and authors their books,—an attribute which is, in reality, “a self-existing, self-outpouring love.”

It is said that a Bostonian once put a weather-vane upon his house, and painted on it, in large letters, “GOD IS LOVE.” One of the man’s neighbors saw it, and said to him: “Friend, you have put an eternal truth on a very changeable thing.”

“That may be,” replied the man; “but *God*

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

is *Love*, no matter which way the wind blows.”

“ God is Love; His mercy brightens
All the path in which we rove;
Bliss He wakes, and woe He lightens:
God is wisdom, God is Love.”

GOD

The first word of John three-sixteen speaks of God, our Father, to whom —

. . . “ we tend,
Path, motive, guide, original, and end.”

A great name is this! None other so great or so ancient. “ In the beginning GOD.”¹ When Moses inquired what he should say to Israel, if asked who sent him, God answered: “ Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you.”² And in another place he declared, “ But by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.”³

¹ Gen. 1 : 1.

² Ex. 3 : 15.

³ Ex. 6 : 3.

THE LOVER'S LOVE

This latter title, as preserved to us in the Hebrew text, is spelled "*Yhwh.*" What it was, no man knows. No such word is spelled in modern Hebrew, though it is evidently derived from, if not a part of, the verb "*hyh,*" — to be. "In the formula which our translators render 'I AM THAT I AM,' the name is evidently a part of that verb; but its form belongs to an older Hebrew, which was as lost to the Jews of later days as the Anglo-Saxon of Cynewulf is to the average English reader." Until the sixth century, Hebrew was a language without vowels. Since that time they have been added to prevent the total loss of correct pronunciation, though they are seldom written by the learned Jew. If we were familiar with the Sacred Scriptures, we could read our English New Testaments as freely without printed vowels as with them.

"But the Hebrew soon came to cherish toward the name of God that superstitious fear which is common to the whole East. He would not venture to address his king by

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

name: why should he so address his God? The result was that when he came to the letters 'Yhvh' in the Sacred Text, he said 'the Lord,' just as did our first translators, following the practice of all versions up to their time. When the Hebrew scribe did write in any vowels with this sacred name, he wrote the vowels of the word he would substitute for it. He did not pretend that they were part of the name itself, as originally given. The result was that we have the name 'Jehovah,' which is made up of the vowels of one word and the consonants of another. For a hundred years, at least, the conviction has been growing, based upon a study of ancient Greek and still more ancient Samaritan authors, that the name given through Moses was not only written 'Yhvh,' but should be pronounced 'Yahveh;' and that it probably constituted in ancient Hebrew a verbal noun meaning 'being.' It thus contained within itself the whole doctrine of monotheism, causality, and sovereignty."

When God revealed His omnipotence to

THE LOVER'S LOVE

Abram, He said: "I am the Almighty God."⁴ To Jeremiah He declared His omnipresence: "Am I a God at hand, . . . and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? . . . Do not I fill heaven and earth?"⁵ Paul acknowledges His omniscience thus: "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."⁶ James confesses his immutability when he calls Him "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."⁷ But it is left to Jesus and John to give the grandest conception of this Hebrew "Yhvh," and Greek "Yahveh," and English "Jehovah,"—"God so loved,"—and extending beyond the Hebrew, Greek, or English—"GOD IS LOVE."⁸

The word "love" is purely a New Testament term, and was used by its writers about one hundred and forty times. In the Authorized Version, the word is used one hundred and fourteen times, and charity twenty-six

⁴ Gen. 17 : 1.

⁵ Jer. 23 : 23.

⁶ Heb. 4 : 13.

⁷ James 1 : 17.

⁸ 1 John 4 : 8.

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

times; but in the Revised Version it is uniformly translated love. The Greek language had four words to signify love, but *agapao* was the exalted term. In it is expressed the deepest significance of the truth of God. "It denotes," as Cremer says, "a love practically unknown outside of the range of Scripture,—a love possessing a character all its own, to express which terms in ordinary use must have been looked upon as quite inadequate." "Its fullest meaning," as E. P. Fuller says, "is given in the New Testament, and here especially in the terms of divine action — God's love. Its distinctive qualities are that it chooses its object with decision of will, and is benevolent, wishing well to, and regarding the welfare of, its object. This is the word which is used in the New Testament to express God's love to men."

To know God is the highest and noblest aspiration of the soul. "I have always," sang Robert Browning,—

. . . "had one lode-star; now
As I look back, I see that I have halted

THE LOVER'S LOVE

Or hastened as I looked toward that star —
A need, a trust, a yearning after God."

It is only through love that we learn to know God. Classic Greece and Rome are called by those who knew them best "a world without love," while the uncivilized Algonkians had no such word till the missionary who translated the Bible into their tongue invented one. But our language and Bible teach it; and we believe, as Lord Tennyson wrote, that —

"Through the will of the One who knows and rules,
Utter knowledge is but utter love."

There are those who tell us that we can not know God. Blessed be His name, we can. When Phillips Brooks told the deaf, blind, and dumb Helen Keller, as a child, that God was her Heavenly Father, she answered: "I knew that before. I think I have always known it."

"I am looking for Jesus," said an orphan boy to a lady who found him by his father's grave. "He is not here; He is risen," said the woman.

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

"I know it," replied the boy, "but I've been waiting here all day for Him to come, and raise my papa up."

"How will you know Him, dear child?" she asked.

"By His smile," replied the child; and, placing his hand on his heart, he said: "I'll know Him best in here by the love."

"Love is the synonym of God," and "the very being of God is the expression of infinite love." John declares, "Every one that loveth is born of God, and *knoweth God*," and the one that "knoweth not God," is "he that loveth not;" "for God is Love."⁹

God is *creative* Love. Lord Kelvin, better known as Sir William Thomson, said: "Forty years ago, walking somewhere in the country, I asked Liebig if he believed that the grass and the flowers which he saw around us grew by mere chemical forces. He answered: "No! no more than I would believe that a book of botany, describing them, could grow by mere chemical forces."

⁹ 1 John 4: 7, 8.

THE LOVER'S LOVE

Henry Ward Beecher had a celestial globe in his study. On it was an excellent representation of the constellations, and the stars which compose them. Robert G. Ingersoll, the infidel lawyer, saw the apparatus, and was delighted with it. After examining it closely, he said: "It's just what I want. Who made it?"

"Who made it?" replied Beecher; "who made this globe? Oh, nobody, Colonel; it just happened!"

"Show me your God," demanded the Emperor Trajan of Joshua, a Jewish rabbi.

"Come out of the house, and see one of His ambassadors," replied the sage.

Leading the emperor into an open space, the rabbi bade him look upon the sun, then shining in his strength. "What! can you not look in the face of the ambassador?" he asked. "Are you blinded by his dazzling presence? How, then, can you look upon the countenance of the King?"

God is everywhere, and His name is written upon all His works. His majesty is seen

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

in the towering mountain and the mighty ocean; His love shines in every flower and dewdrop; His voice is heard in the storm; and His glory is depicted on the variegated landscape, in the lightning flash, and in the magnificent aurora.

“This world’s no blot for us, nor blank;
It means intensely, and means good.”

If the Arabian guide crossing the desert of Sahara with a French scientist saw in the sinking sun the wisdom and glory of the Creator; if Galileo saw in the construction of a wheat straw that lay on his prison floor the work of an intelligent Maker; if Coleridge, when standing before Mont Blanc, uncovered his head in reverence to its Creator; if Jenny Lind fell upon her knees and gave thanks to God when she first saw Niagara; and if —

“To blind old Milton’s rayless orbs,
A light divine is given;
And deaf Beethoven hears the hymns
And harmonies of heaven.”—

THE LOVER'S LOVE

surely we, who walk through fields of golden grain, and sit beneath trees laden with luscious fruit, and drink from the sweet, gurgling springs, must be blind and deaf if we perceive not God's love!

"All nature speaks the attributes of God,
Whose vast domain of matter and of mind
Accords forever with His holy will.
All life is an expression of His love: . . .
All discord is the fragment of a scale,
Which, had man but the power to comprehend,
Would be replete with harmony divine."

God is *Fatherly* love. To create is not to be a father in the highest sense of the term. The artist is not called the father of the picture he paints, neither is the inventor called the father of the machine he contrives. To be a father is to communicate an existence like his own. All who believe in Jesus become, through him, "partakers of the divine nature,"¹⁰ "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."¹¹

¹⁰ 2 Peter 1 : 4.

¹¹ John 1 : 13.

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

Children of God! Think of it! Said John, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."¹² Precious relationship, is it not? In relation to humanity, He is King; but to those in Christ Jesus, Father! In the New Testament Scriptures, God is spoken of as King only five times, but as Father more than two hundred; while in the memorable Sermon on the Mount, this term is used sixteen times.¹³ It is baptism in the name of the Father; the lesson about prayer and providence begins with the word Father; the announcement of Christ's Messiahship is in the name of the Father; the Advocate is with the Father; the Comforter is to come from the Father; "our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ;"¹⁴ of whom the latter declared: "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me."¹⁵

A young clergyman in a London church

¹² 1 John 3: 1.

¹³ Matt. 5: 16, 45, 48; 6: 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 14, 18, 26, 32; 7: 11, 21.

¹⁴ 1 John 1: 3.

¹⁵ John 16: 27.

THE LOVER'S LOVE

lost his wife. They had a little child. The parishioners hoped that some relative would come to take care of it, but none appeared. Two or three years passed. One Sunday when the pews were crowded, the clergyman came up the aisle leading the child, whom he seated in the corner of the front pew. The service went on until the sermon began. In his sermon the minister spoke of the mother of Christ, and her agony of heart at the cross. Said he: "Think what a child's life is without a mother's love! Who else can wrap a babe in swaddling-clothes? Who can tend, who can cherish, who can love, but a mother?" In the depth of his feeling, the rector's strong voice halted, as if for an answer; and in the hush of the great congregation a little, childish voice spoke out, very sweetly and clearly, "A faver would do just eve'y bit as well, papa dear."

So our Father, with heart more tender than a mother's, with sympathy more pronounced than a brother's, and with love exceeding all human love combined, seeks to do the greatest

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

good and be the greatest good to the greatest number of the family of mankind. Can we not, then, say, with Jesus, "Our Father,"¹⁶ and declare, with Marianne Farningham,—

"Our Father knows, our Father cares!

How great Thy gentleness!

We dare to live, and dare to die,

We are not fatherless.

Dear Father, whom we can not see,

Our life is glad because of Thee."

WHY SOME DO NOT LOVE GOD

God being Love, is it not strange that so many love Him not? Why is this, when He is such a loving and lovable character?

Some do not love God because they do not know Him. He is to them as He was to the Athenians, "the unknown God,"¹⁷ and to them He will remain unknown as long as they continue dead in trespasses and sins. Not to love God is a self-evident fact of death. "He that loveth not," said John, "abideth in death."¹⁸

¹⁶ Luke 11 : 2.

¹⁷ Acts 17 : 23.

¹⁸ 1 John 3 : 14.

THE LOVER'S LOVE

When Hector was going to his last battle, his wife accompanied him as far as the gates of the city, followed by a nurse carrying their infant child. About to depart, Hector held out his hands to receive the little one, but, terrified by the burnished helmet and waving plume, the child turned away, and clung to the mother's neck. In a moment, divining the cause of the babe's alarm, the warrior took off his helmet, and cast it on the ground; and then, smiling through his tears, the little fellow leaped into his father's arms.

Not to know God is to judge him incorrectly. Sometimes we consider His providences judgments, and mistake His favors for frowns. Because of this we talk against Him, and insult Him by setting at naught His ordinances, trampling on His laws, spurning His invitations, and refusing to accept His love. O what foolishness, yea, what recklessness! To know not God is to have Him declare, "I know you not." And if we wilfully persist in being ignorant of Him, there will come a day —

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“When the sinner shall hear his doom,
Depart, I know ye not.”

Some do not love God because they believe not in Him. Base perversion of the mind, when God is intended to be the everlasting field of the human intellect, the everlasting object of the human heart! Unbelief in God becomes the father to the expression, “There is no God,”¹⁹ as it becomes the promoter of evil; for such disbelief gives the widest scope for wrong-doing. Let men persuade themselves that God is a myth, that the future life is a dream, that “they shall die,” as South said, “like beasts;” and “they will soon be brought to live like beasts also.”

Plucking the “Texas Star” flower, a skeptic observed that it had five petals, five stamens, and five base divisions. Was this a mere chance, he asked himself. Multiplying the three fives together, he said: “Here, on a scientific ground, are one hundred and twenty-five chances to one that this is not mere chance.” Looking about him, he found many

¹⁹ Ps. 14: 1.

THE LOVER'S LOVE

of the same flowers with exactly the same structural plan. Then he said: "Here is order; here is plan; here is an infinite number of chances against a cipher that these plants had a wise Creator; and I have been wrong all the time. There is a God, and He shall be my God."

The reason one disbelieves in God is because he knows that if there is a just God presiding over the destinies of men, there will be a reckoning day; if there is a reckoning day, he will be held accountable for his deeds; if accountable, he is responsible; and if responsible, he will be punished for his sins. The greatest sin is unbelief. Paul implies that unbelief proceeds from an "evil heart,"²⁰ and that those will "be damned who believed not the truth."²¹ To escape the thought of such punishment, the unbeliever must get rid of responsibility. To rid himself of responsibility, he must ignore accountability. To ignore accountability, he must destroy the thought of a judgment. To destroy the thought of a

²⁰ Heb. 3 : 12.

²¹ 2 Thess. 2 : 12.

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judgment, he must believe there is no God. Alas for such destructive reasoning!

Some do not love God because they do not realize His love to them. If they did, they would love self and the world less. John said, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."²² But how God loves us, when we deserve nothing but His hatred. A little enumeration of the blessings He bestows, and who dare fail to appreciate His love? Who? — None but the heartless.

A gentleman of wealth and social position was very ill. A Christian man visited him, and learned how little love he had for God. Desiring that he should know something of God's great love, he remarked: "When I leave you, I shall go to my residence, and the first thing I expect to do is to call my baby. I shall place her on my knee, look into her sweet eyes, listen to her charming prattle, and, tired as I am, her presence will rest me; for I love that child with unutterable tenderness. Does she love me? you ask. The fact is, she

²² 1 John 2: 15.

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loves me little. If my heart was breaking, it would not disturb her sleep. If my body was racked with excruciating pain, it would not interrupt her play. If I were dead, she would be amused in watching my pale face and closed eyes. If any friend came to remove the remains to the place of burial, she would probably clap her hands in glee, and in two or three days totally forget her papa. Besides this, she has never brought me a penny, but has been a constant expense on my hands ever since her birth. Yet, though I am not rich, there is not money enough in the world to buy my baby. How is it? Does she love me, or do I love her? Do I withhold my love until I know she loves me? Am I waiting for her to do something worthy of my love before I extend it to her?"

"Oh, I see! I see!" exclaimed the sick man, while the tears rolled down his cheeks. "I see it clearly. It is not what I think of God, but what God thinks of me,—not my love to God, but God's love to me,—I ought to be

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thinking about. I do love Him now as I never loved Him before.”

“ O the love of God is o'er us,
Like the broodings of a dove;
Let us join the happy chorus,—
God is Light, and Truth, and Love.”

Will not *you*, dear reader, love God? It is all He asks; for, having your love, He has all. When Pythagoras discovered that the square of the hypotenuse of a right angle triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the opposite sides, he rose from his study, went to the altar, and in a devout spirit sacrificed an ox. Will not you show your appreciation of God's love, this moment, by presenting your body “ a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God ”? ²³ Tenderly, lovingly, for the sake of your soul and the souls of others, the author asks, Will not you love this divine Lover? Look up into His face, by faith put your hand in His, and pray,—

²³ Rom. 12 : 1.

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“ Finish, then, Thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let *me* be;
Let *me* see Thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in Thee:
Changed from glory unto glory,
Till in heaven *I* take *my* place,
Till *I* cast *my* crown before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.”

II

THE LOVER'S INTENSITY OF LOVE —“ SO LOVED ”

THE world has not a greater or purer virtue than love. It is heaven-born, the subject of angel's song, the key-note of seraph's harp, and the theme of man's meditation, filling his soul with unutterable joy. It is “ omnipresent in nature as motive and reward.” It distinguishes every creature, gives beauty to every cloud, fills the air with songs, and transforms the stars into God's autograph letters. It is that which can not be bounded by horizons, ever new yet ever old,—

“ Old as eternity, but not outworn ;

With each new being born, or to be born.”

The very first line of Genesis reads, “ In the beginning God ; ” and according to the beloved disciple, “ God is love.”¹ Love, therefore, must have been the first thing that

¹ 1 John 4 : 8.

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inhabited space; it must have existed before the "sons of God shouted for joy,"² and sent forth its benignant rays before God said, "Let there be light."³ It must have been the "master of all arts" before the heavens were studded with glittering tapers, the waters were alive with various species of fish, and the prairies ministered to the necessities of the bee and the sustenance of the herd. And when heaven and earth shall pass away, love will still endure; for "love never faileth."⁴ It is indestructible.

"Its holy flame forever burneth:
From heaven it came, to heaven returneth."

It is a significant fact that to all creatures God has imparted, in greater or lesser degree, this attribute of love. The lower forms of animal life are not devoid of it; and as the scale of being rises, so does the degree of love increase. In the mother race of birds, beasts, and reptiles this is noticed; while love in the human being, and especially in the Christian,

² Job 38 : 7.

³ Gen. 1 : 3.

⁴ 1 Cor. 13 : 8.

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is not bounded by family ties, but reaches out to all classes, and reveals itself in a thousand ways. Love —

. . . “makes excuses where she might condemn;
Reviled by those that hate her, prays for them;
Suspicion lurks not in her artless breast;
The worst suggested, she believes the best.
Not soon provoked, however stung and teased,
And, if perhaps made angry, soon appeased;
She rather waives than will dispute her right,
And, injured, makes forgiveness her delight.”

But where is there found a declaration of love so broad yet so concise as John three-sixteen? Captain Speke, when seeking the source of the Nile, wrote in his diary as he sat on the southern bank of Victoria Nyanza, August third, eighteen hundred fifty-eight, “I no longer felt any doubt that the lake at my feet gave birth to that interesting river, the source of which has been the subject of so much speculation and the object of so many explorers.” But where is the fountainhead of love? What prophet or priest has traced it,

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unless it be Christ, who declared that back of maternal, paternal, and Christian love is God, and "God is love."

WHAT GOD DID

Not only does the sacred writer reveal what God is, but what God did — He *loved*. The verb is in the past tense, thus showing that before we had being; when we had being, but not intelligence; when we had intelligence, but were wayward; when we could have loved, but spurned love, God *loved*. Blessed thought, that when we were hard-hearted and rebellious, God, the great and loving Father, loved us dearly!

This love was unsolicited. We had nothing to do with it. It was compassionate, God pitying us. It was partial. Though God loved a world of sinners lost, each can truly say, "He loved me." Washington Irving once visited a dying boy, and putting his hand on the lad's fevered brow, said, in parting, "My boy, God loves you." The words transformed the lad. In joy he called out to the

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people in the house: "God loves me! God loves me!"

"Wondrous words, how rich in blessing!

Deeper than the unfathomed sea,

Broader than its world of waters,

Boundless, infinite, and free!

Higher than the heavens above

Is Thine everlasting love."

THE INTENSITY OF THE LOVER'S LOVE

Not only is God love, not only did He love, but one word tells us of the intensity of that love—"so" loved. It is a degree beyond expression and conception. Lexicographers define the monosyllable "so" in its relations as adverb, conjunction, and interjection; but no one dare attempt to explain it in its relation to God's love. Scientists claim to have weighed our globe, and measured the distance between us and Mars; but no man dare attempt to weigh or measure this little word "so." In this connection it is the Mont Blanc of the Biblical monosyllables, the hieroglyphic that human intelligence can not de-

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cipher, the incomprehensible word whose full meaning even the angels have failed to grasp.

Cicero is said to have seen Homer's Iliad written in such small characters that it could have been contained in a nutshell. In the Elizabethan age, Peter Bales, a celebrated calligrapher, is said to have written the whole Bible so minutely that the manuscript could be shut up in a common walnutshell. Wendell Phillips relates that he had a friend who owned a ring three quarters of an inch in diameter, on the seal of which was engraved the naked figure of Hercules. By the aid of glasses there could be distinguished the interlacing muscles, and every hair in the eyebrows could be counted. Queen Victoria had a needle which was made at Redditch, and which represented the column of Trajan in miniature. The well-known Roman column is adorned with numerous scenes in sculpture, perpetuating Trajan's heroic actions in war. On this diminutive needle, scenes in the life of Queen Victoria are represented in relief, but so finely cut that they require a magnify-

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ing-glass to see them. Moreover, it can be opened, disclosing a number of needles in smaller size, which are likewise adorned with scenes in relief. On the occasion of Pope Leo's jubilee he was presented by the celebrated Neapolitan artist, Andrea Cartello, with a topaz weighing one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four grains, on which he had engraved a picture of "The Last Supper." This design took the artist twelve years to accomplish, and the gem with its decoration is estimated to be worth eighty thousand dollars. But in this little word "so," connected with the word "loved," there is more to see, more to learn, than in a hundred of Homer's minute Iliads, or the ring of the friend of Wendell Phillips, or Victoria's needle, or the engraved topaz of Leo the Thirteenth. In it is expressed a love which baffles description in its extent, diversity, and vastness,— a love illimitable as boundless space, and as incomprehensible as eternity,— a love that human thought can not fathom, nor human language describe. By the receding of

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the Falls of Niagara, geologists have endeavored to determine the antiquity of the river; but where is the geologist who can unearth the footprints of love, or the astronomer who can find its starting point? It existed long before a Niagara, long before the creation of this planet.

“ Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every blade of grass a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,—
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though spread from sky to sky.”

God “ *so* loved.” Such a statement is not without proof. Everything demonstrates it. He *so* loved as to make a beautiful world; *so* loved as to make a pure man to inhabit the world; *so* loved as to walk and talk with this man in the world; *so* loved as to devise a plan to save man when he fell a victim to temptation; *so* loved as to warn transgressors

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of their ways, and to give promises and hold out inducements to live holy lives; *so* loved as to give a Redeemer to restore unto man what he had forfeited by sin; *so* loved as to adopt into His family all who would approach Him in the name of His Son; *so* loved as to prepare mansions for all in His celestial Paradise.

And still He loves us. Are we weary? He desires to give us rest. Are we sad? He desires to give us joy. Are we weak? He desires to give us strength. Are we in darkness? He desires to give us light. Are we living in the shadow? He desires to lead us into the sunshine. Are we longing for home? He desires us to trust Him; for, said He, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."⁵

"*So* loved!" O that every mind would grasp the thought of this phrase! then would youth and aged, intelligent and ignorant, rich and poor, see in this little word the infinite ocean of His affection. "God *so* loved!"

⁵ John 14: 3.

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“ His word proclaims it ;
Day by day the truth we've proved ;
Heaven and earth with joy are telling,
Ever telling, ' God so loved ! ' ”

RECIPROCATED LOVE

If God is love, and His love has been and is so intensely manifested, should not all His intelligent creatures reciprocate it? Such a question determines one's respect, for love begets love; it determines one's character, for love alone understands love; it also determines one's knowledge, for “ he that loveth not, knoweth not God,”⁶ and there is no true way of knowing Him except by loving Him. To love God “ is the highest heritage of our manhood, and not to have loved Him is the most condemning fact of our lives.” David exhorts: “ O, love the Lord, all ye His saints ; ”⁷ and Jesus said to the lawyer, “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.”⁸ To love

⁶ 1 John 4 : 8.

⁷ Ps. 31 : 23.

⁸ Luke 10 : 27.

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God thus "must insensibly raise the moral and spiritual character of every one who is controlled by so worthy an endeavor. It insures the recognition of the soul's subjection to the authority of God; it makes the divine excellences the objects of ceaseless contemplation; it subordinates all the aims and activities of life to the holiest purposes." To love God properly must be according to these divine specifications, each of which has a deep and separate significance.

It should be love of *heart*, all the powers of affection consolidated and centralized in God, instead of in self and the world. When Frontenac died, he bequeathed his heart in a golden casket to his wife. "I never had it living," she said; "I will not take it dead." Too many, while living, armor-plate their hearts with the love of the world, thus resisting the sweetness of divine love; but when dying, they wish to bequeath their hearts to God. No greater evidence can there be of lack of genuine heart-love; for "if any man

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love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”⁹

A lady of the East, about to start on a long journey, called her three sons, and asked each to furnish an expression of his love before she left. One of them brought a marble tablet with her name inscribed on it; another presented her with a rich garland of fragrant flowers; but when the third came, he said, “Mother, I have no marble tablet, nor fragrant flowers, but I have a heart; on that heart your name is engraved, and in it your memory is precious; and this heart full of affection will follow you wherever you go, and remain with you wherever you repose.” Such a love of heart our Father desires; such a love of heart He should have; and such a love of heart we should give, acknowledging,—

“My heart owns none above Thee;
For Thy rich grace I thirst;
This knowing: if I love Thee,
Thou must have loved me first.”

There should be love of *soul*. All the liv-

⁹ 1 John 2: 15.

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ing powers,— the whole being, with its emotions, passions, and volitions,— should aspire to make love to God the chief aim. The word “soul” is variously used, according to its several offices. Flavel says: “As it quickens the body, it is called *life*; as it exerts acts of the will, it is called the *mind*; when it recollects, it is called *memory*; as it produces breathing, it is called the *spirit*.” Wonderful the God-given, God-made spirit, “created,” as Augustine said, “by God, for God, and therefore never quiet till it rests in God.” And this can not be unless it seeks God as the dove sought the ark; and this seeking must be like Solomon’s when he exclaimed, “I found Him whom my soul loveth.”¹⁰

When the Hon. William E. Gladstone lay on his death-bed at Hawarden, he was visited by Lord Rosebery. The time came for bidding each other farewell,— the final farewell it proved,— and Mr. Gladstone, who had been in previous years the younger man’s political chieftain, tenderly and earnestly said

¹⁰ Song of Solomon 3 : 4.

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to him: "Rosebery, take care of your soul, take care of your soul."

How could this be done satisfactorily to God and to himself? — Just as it is done between God and us. There is only one way, and that way is by loving Him ardently, loving Him constantly, loving Him unreservedly with the soul.

A step more, and it should be love of *strength*. Love, etymologically, is to hold some one dear, and for that some one it will not hesitate to call into action every muscle, every nerve, yea, every particle of strength. Love for country has caused thousands upon thousands of soldiers to march, fight, and defend their flag with their lives. Love for master prompts the servant to breast any storm, run any risk, battle with any difficulty while strength remains. Love for a dear one will put forth the utmost exertion by night or by day until exhausted nature compels a rest. So, likewise, will love for God be shown in homage and service with one's strength.

Loving God with one's strength is not mere

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sentiment, but careful action; not a heedless thing, but earnest; not spasmodic, but constant. Wayland Hoyt writes of a group of stars called Perseus, which shine for two days with the brilliancy of a star of the second magnitude; then suddenly lose their light, and in three hours drop to the radiance of a star of the fourth magnitude; then, in another three hours and a half, they flash up into their former brightness, but only to grow dim again. So is the love of many professed Christians to God. For a season it is bright and strong, then dim and weak. But God wants love of strength, wherever we are, with whomsoever we are, and in whatever circumstances we are placed. Should He not have it? Shall we not give it?

When Gustave Dore was putting the finishing touch on the face of the Jesus he was painting, a lady stepped quietly into the studio, and stood admiring the picture. Turning, the artist noticed the visitor, and politely said, "Ah, madame! I did not know you were here."

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The lady replied, "Monsieur Dore, you must love Him to be able to paint Him so!"

"Love Him, madame? I should think I do love Him! but if I loved Him more, I should paint Him better." So likewise if we loved Him more, think you not we should show it by our strength of purpose, determination, and action?

Finally, loving God should be with all the *mind*, all the intellectual powers concentrated on God. David knew this when he declared: "My meditation of Him shall be sweet."¹¹

"What if God should place in your hand a diamond," wrote Payson to a young divinity student, "and tell you to inscribe on it a sentence which should be read at the last day, and shown there as an index of your thoughts and feelings. What care and caution would you exercise in the selection! Now this is what God has done. He has placed before you human minds, on which you are about to inscribe, every day and every hour, by your instruction, by your spirit, and by your ex-

¹¹ Ps. 104: 34.

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ample, something which will remain, and be exhibited for or against you at the judgment day.”

What sentence shall be inscribed on our mind? Shall it be one of the world? — God forbid; for it will rise to condemn us when we stand before him. Shall it be relative to self? — No; no! for that will make for vanity, and Paul has exhorted that “nothing be done through vainglory.”¹² Shall it be done to honor God? — Yes, for the chief end of life is to glorify Him. What, then, shall the sentence be? — “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.”¹³

Who — what — shall separate us from God’s love? — Not “death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature.”¹⁴ No,—

“Not all that men on earth can do,
Nor powers on high, nor powers below,
Shall cause His mercy to remove,
Or wean our hearts from Christ, our love.”

¹² Phil. 2 : 3.

¹³ 1 John 4 : 10.

¹⁴ Rom. 8 : 38, 39.

III

THE LOVER'S OBJECT—"THE WORLD"

WHEREVER love exists, there is found an object of that love. This is as certain as that two hills suggest a valley, a coin the die, the shadow an object. It was love for children that led Robert Raikes to establish the Sunday-school, love for suffering prisoners that prompted John Howard to bring about prison reform, love for suffering soldiers that inspired Florence Nightingale and Clara Barton to venture on the battle-field. It was love for the heathen that lent fame to Carey, love for birds that gave honor to Audubon, love for nature that bestowed glory on Thoreau, love for bees that brought a fortune to Huber, and love for the slaves that gave perpetuity to the names of Wilberforce and Lincoln. There is not a library nor a mechanic's shop but is an evidence of the love of knowledge;

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not a picture-gallery nor a flower garden but tells of the love of the beautiful; not a cheerful home, however devoid of costly furniture, but speaks of the love of industry.

Love turns to its object as the magnetic needle points to the north. As the law of gravitation is to draw everything earthward, so the law of love is to draw everything heavenward. The lover's gift is to appeal to the receiver's heart. The nuptial knot is the result of mutual love. The mother rocks the cradle not for the cradle's sake, but for the love of the little life in the cradle. Unlike the thermometer, which rises and lowers to the outside temperature, love does not fluctuate. For association with its object it will give strength and swiftness; for its defense it will impart courage and banish fear; for its pleasure it will remove painful thorns and scatter fragrant flowers in its pathway; and for its salvation it will bleed in sacrifice and die in atonement.

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THE WORLD

The object of God's love is the world. The term sometimes denotes the whole universe, sometimes this planetary body, sometimes the people who inhabit it. As we love not the frame so much as the picture, nor the cage so much as the canary, so God loves not the world with its lighted tapers and fragrant flowers, its golden sun-rays and rippling rills, so much as the rational beings who live in the world. This world is cursed and scarred by sin, and therefore in its present condition it must perish. It is condemned, and, as Paul said, "The fashion of this world passeth away."¹ Thirteen fixed stars, according to astronomers, have disappeared in the last three centuries. Chemists teach that there is an inflammable element in water; and Sir Charles Lyell, in speaking of the combustible elements in our globe, says, "The wonder is, not that the earth will be dissolved, but that it exists for a moment." But if no astronomer, nor geologist, nor chemist, nor any scientist

¹ 1 Cor. 7: 31.

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will defend the assertion of Paul, God's infallible word is enough: "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."²

It is not the material world that God so loves, but sinful creatures in the world, to whom He gave being and semblance of Himself, desiring "all men to be saved."³ Placing his hand on the shoulder of Dr. Pentecost after he had preached for Dr. Bonar, the latter said, "You love to preach, don't you?"

"Yes, I do," answered Dr. Pentecost.

"Do you love the men to whom you preach?" was the searching question then asked.

Did God love the world He made? What otherwise could he have done, when He pronounced the light, the earth and sea, the sun and moon, the creatures of the water, air, and land, yes, everything that He had made, very good! God's love for sinful man was so great

² 2 Peter 3: 10.

³ 1 Tim. 2: 4.

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that he sent His Son into the world, not "to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved,"⁴ and according to Paul's writing to Timothy, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."⁵ Such a thought was what won the admiration of the South Sea Islander when Mr. Nott read this precious declaration. "Is that true? Can that be true?" asked the native, as he rose from his seat. "God loved the world when the world loved Him not!" Yes, and He loves it still, as the father loved his prodigal son when absent from home. Every day brings new evidence that —

. . . "endless is His love;
His gifts are every evening new.
And morning mercies from above
Gently distil like early dew."

This love shines with great effulgence from the fact that this is a sinful world. From the day our first parents sinned, sin has been increasing until the earth fairly groans beneath its corruption. Sin has wrung tears from mil-

⁴ John 3 : 17.

⁵ 1 Tim. 1 : 15.

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lions of eyes, broken millions of hearts, blasted millions of hopes, dug millions of graves, and ruined millions of souls. There is not a crime to which the world has not stooped, not a vice in which it has not indulged, not a risk it has not run, not an infamous charge it has not laid against God; and yet God loves the world. Could there be a more touching appeal to our hearts?

This love is conspicuous from the fact that this is a treacherous world. Love woos us in order to save us from sorrow and death. To seek the pleasure of the world is to jeopardize the soul. There is not a glittering gem that the world offers but will bring sorrow as it did to Achan; not an honor it can bestow that will not crush the receiver, as it did Haman; and not a devotee at its shrine to whom it will not prove traitorous, as it did to Absalom. Beware of its sparkling beverage: it is drugged. Beware of its kiss; for while it kisses, it will stab, as Joab stabbed Amasa. Beware of its promise of liberty; for it will lead into captivity and death. But listen! it

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is good news. God so loved the world, the treacherous world, the present world, as to provide a way to save all who will come unto Him.

This love is still more wonderful from the fact that this is a rebellious world. Against God and His authority many imitate Absalom. Not content with returning hatred for love, they take up arms against God. There were those in David's day who "rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High."⁶ Isaiah, in his day, wrote of those who "rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit."⁷ There were those in the days of Jesus who said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us."⁸ Nor are there lacking in our day those who rebel against His authority, His laws, His teaching, and who seem to take delight in arraying their tongues and pens against Him. What cruel dispositions! What sorrows and misery are they challenging! "Is that so?" said Dr. Bachus, president of Hamilton College, when

⁶ Ps. 107 : 11.

⁷ Isa. 63 : 10.

⁸ Luke 19 : 14.

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told he had but half an hour longer to live.
“ Then take me out of bed, and place me upon
my knees, and let me spend that time in call-
ing on God for the salvation of the world.”
Pray, O my soul! pray for these indifferent,
rebellious, perishing creatures, who spurn
divine love, and stop their ears to the voice of
conscience, and revel in sin. Plead, O plead,
my human powers! and arrest them if possible
from their awful doom over sin’s precipice to
the chasm of death. Sinner, do not —

. . . “ scorn the message,
Sent in mercy from above.
Every sentence, O how tender!
Every line is full of love:
Listen to it;
Every line is full of love.

“ Hear the heralds of the gospel
News from Zion’s King proclaim:
Pardon to each rebel sinner;
Free forgiveness in His name:
How important —
Free forgiveness in His name!”

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THE LOVER'S KIND OF LOVE

One significant thing about God's love is that it is the love of benevolence. Arthur T. Pierson speaks of the love of complacency and the love of benevolence, and explains the difference thus: The former "dwells on the lovable traits in others," the latter "loves most abundantly when there is no merit." With God it must have been the latter; for what lovable traits are there in the nature of man, who is born in sin, sinful in living, and corrupt in death? But because there was "none righteous, no, not one,"⁹ in mercy and pity God loved man with benevolence, as the father loves his wayward son,—to aid, to exalt, to reinstate in the family.

During the Revolutionary War a Dunkard named Miller was grievously insulted by a man named Widman, who was afterward sentenced to be hanged as a British spy. Miller went to General Washington and begged for Widman's life. The Commander-in-chief re-

⁹ Rom. 3: 10.

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plied, "I would like to release Widman, because he is your friend, but I dare not, even for that consideration."

"Friend," cried Miller, "why, he is my worst enemy, and therefore I want to save him."

"Enemy," said Washington, "and you have come to me for your enemy's sake? Then I pardon him."

That was benevolent love on the part of each. How much more God's love to the world! Widman insulted Miller once; the world insults God continually. Widman spat in Miller's face; the world is treating God contemptibly. Widman was sentenced to death; justice has demanded the full penalty of death on the world, but God's love has interceded, God's love has proffered mercy. Well might we demand our souls to sing His wondrous love,—

"Who from yon bright throne above,
Ever watchful o'er our race,
Still to man extends His grace."

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THE OBJECT OF THE WORLD'S LOVE SHOULD
BE GOD

The world being the object of God's love, God should be the center of the world's affection. That He should love a world we see no reason, but that the world should love Him we see great and strong reasons. Though independent, His very nature craves the love of His creatures. All love given to Him is returned in a manifold, beneficent way, as the waters drawn by the sun from the rivers and seas are sent back in copious showers to nourish vegetation. To love God is the greatest service, the pleasantest occupation, the loftiest privilege, in which man can engage; and the reason the whole world loves Him not is because it has not yet discovered that "God is love."¹⁰

That was a great occasion when Columbus, in command of three small vessels and one hundred and twenty men, started on his adventurous enterprise to discover a new world. Interesting the undertaking of Ponce de

¹⁰ 1 John 4 : 8.

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Leon, who journeyed far to find the mythical fountain of youth and beauty. But far greater, far more interesting, is the exploration of God's love. There is no disappointment to one who enters upon this quest, as to De Leon; nor no ingratitude shown, as to Columbus by Ferdinand; but there will be success, and with that success, joy; and that joy will come through knowledge, because "we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."¹¹

Have you sought this loving and lovable God? Are you seeking to know and love Him? "*Si vis amari, ama,*" was Seneca's wise instruction,—“Love, if you wish to be loved.” To comprehend all God's love is impossible, but to contemplate it is delightful. Go to your secret chamber, walk in some quiet retreat, enumerate God's favors to you, or consult some devout lover of Him, and you will not only find His love a sufficient cause

¹¹ 1 John 4 : 16.

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for your love, but you will formulate an inspired rule to love Him and to say:—

. . . “ God and Father,
My Redeemer and my King;
I would love Thee; for without Thee
Life is but a bitter thing.

“ I would love Thee; I have vowed it;
On Thy love my heart is set:
While I love Thee, I will never
My Redeemer's blood forget.”

To love God is right for every person in the world, because God loves every person in the world. It is the most commendable thing; for love is the greatest virtue. “And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”¹² It is the most obligatory service; for God has loved us “with an everlasting love,”¹³ and has commended His love toward us, while yet sinners, by sending “His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.”¹⁴

Love is immortal. Many things are of short duration. Hate, envy, strife, end with

¹² 1 Cor. 13 : 13.

¹³ Jer. 31 : 3.

¹⁴ 1 John 4 : 9.

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the grave. Influence lives beyond it; but, if evil, it receives its death-blow at the judgment. But love — love to God — never ceases. Its reign is eternal, and its song in this present life and in the life to come is,—

“E'en so I love Thee, and will love,
And in Thy praise will sing;
Solely because Thou art my God,
And my eternal King.”

When in the height of his power, Napoleon Bonaparte established in one of the little towns of France an orphanage for girls. After his return from banishment at Elba, he paid it a visit. The girls crowded about him as he left, and gave him the most touching expressions of their love and admiration. They covered his hands with kisses and tears, claiming the privilege of a last grasp and a last word as he left. Afterward came Waterloo, and his banishment to the rocky isle of St. Helena. His power was at an end. His Old Guard bit the dust, his empire fell with a crash, and with it his glory, his ensign, and his air-castles crumbled in a single night. One

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thing, however, survived which gave him real pleasure, and brought from his lips exclamations of joy. It was the kind words, the tears, and the kisses of those orphan children.

Love God, you who peruse these pages. That love is the only basis for noble character, the only true principle for a pure life, the only band that can not be broken by death, the only investment that will bring an eternal interest. Will you love Him? Say: By His help I will. Then pray,—

“Leave me not, my Strength, my Trust ;
Oh, remember I am dust.
Leave me not again to stray ;
Fix my heart on things above ;
Make me happy in Thy love.”

THE KIND OF LOVE GOD WANTS FROM THE WORLD

Inasmuch as God's love is that of benevolence, should not every person return a special love to Him — a love of unselfishness? Too many love self, for which they will undertake long journeys, undergo severe hard-

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ships, and make great sacrifices, all of which they do not for God, because of a lack of love for Him.

When Dr. Franklin applied to the King of Prussia to lend his assistance to America, the latter asked: "Pray, Doctor, what is the object you mean to attain?"

"Liberty, sire," replied the philosopher,—
"Liberty! that freedom which is the birth-right of all men."

After a short pause the king made answer: "I was born a prince, I am become a king, and I will not use the power I possess to the ruin of my own trade." Ah, self, "ruling tyrant," excluding, as thou dost and ever wilt, the love and right of others, thou art the social brigand that demands obeisance, extorting the capital of one's fellow men, whether under protest or not.

"O impudent! regardful of thy own,

Whose thoughts are centered on thyself alone."

Which is the better — love or selfishness?
Contrast food and poison, purity and vice,

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heaven and hell, God and Satan, and ask the question, "Which is better?" Selfishness is a winter's frost, congealing the best instincts in the human breast; love is a springtime zephyr, transforming flakes of snow into drops of rain, and turning the frozen clods to mellowness and beauty. Selfishness "makes the miser's wealth a Dead Sea of riches, but love changes it into a river flowing through happy fields." Selfishness recognizes no law but its own; love recognizes all God's laws, and seeks to fulfill them. Selfishness is misery; love is happiness. "The love of self," said Charnock, "is the great letter in the alphabet of practical atheism. It is the great anti-God;" but love for God is the cement that binds hearts to God and to each other. "Your soul," said Dr. Gordon, "is useless to God till taken out from sin and earthliness and selfishness, in which it is buried." "To emigrate," said Henry Ward Beecher, "from the low country of selfishness, where are perpetual chills and fevers, to the highlands of benevolence, goes from sickness and barren-

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ness to the realms of health, plenty, and joy, where the hand can almost pluck the fruits from the tree of life itself." Which is better? — Love! for that is —

. . . "life's end! an end, but never ending;
All joys, all sweets, all happiness, awarding;
Love is life's wealth (ne'er spent, but ever spending),
More rich by giving, taking by discarding;
Love's life's reward, rewarding in rewarding."

Before the Civil War a traveler passing through the South had his pity awakened for a young slave. He purchased her from her master and gave her her liberty. After the bargain had been completed, he found difficulty in making the girl realize that she was actually free. At last that fact dawned upon her in its fulness of meaning; but, instead of exulting in her new-gained liberty, she exclaimed: "Oh, he has set me free! I can never thank him enough! I will serve him all my life!" She thought not of pleasing herself, but her friend; and when any one would speak of her loving service to her benefactor,

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she would reply, "He redeemed me! He redeemed me! I will serve him all my life."

Would to God there were more love like this to Him who loved us so much. He deserves it, He should have it. Will you not so love Him? Tune your heart and voice, dear friend, to sing:—

"Thee will I love, my strength, my tower;
Thee will I love, my joy, my crown;
Thee will I love with all my power,
In all my works, and Thee alone.
Thee will I love till sacred fire
Fill my whole soul with pure desire."

IV

THE LOVER'S PROOF—"THAT HE GAVE"

"LOVE requires not so much proof," wrote Richter, "as expressions of love." Spoken or shown, such are indicative of that virtue, and none are more essentially communicative. It successfully challenges all tests, and never asks, "What shall I get?" but, always, "What shall I give?" As the touch of the electric button makes the bell ring, or flashes on the light, so love with its gentle touch makes the tongue speak, the eye glow, the cheek smile, the hands work, the brain think, and the heart feel.

Thomas a Kempis, in his "Imitation of Christ," speaks of love as that which makes every heavy thing light, thinks nothing of trouble, attempts what is above its strength, complains not of impossibility; being weary, is not tired; being pressed, is not straitened;

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being alarmed, is not confounded; but is active, amiable, courageous, and never seeking itself.

“ ’Tis the caress of everything:

The turtle-dove;

Both birds and beasts do offerings bring

To mighty Love.

’Tis the angels’ joy, and earth’s delight,

Man’s bliss;

’Tis all in all. Without love nothing is.”

Love is evidential. It is circumspect, but hides itself no more than the twinkling star. If it will not sing its praise in words, it can not refrain from singing in deeds. Sympathy is its very life-breath —

“ The silver link, the silken tie,

Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,

In body and in soul can bind.”

When the poor widow told her troubles to Elisha, the prophet did not say, “ I sympathize with you; I hope you will prosper,” but he gave her real help. Several times we read that Jesus was “ moved with compassion; ”¹

¹ Matt. 9 : 36 ; 14 : 14 ; Mark 6 : 34.

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but it was of that practical kind that cleansed the leper, ministered to the sick, and fed the hungry multitude.

Such evidences Paul calls "labors of love."² But anything that gives comfort, extends privileges, and is a blessing, is simply God's love-gift. Everything, before and since the unequalled gift of His Son, centers in that gift itself. "He gave," and still gives. The whole history of the world and of man is a history of gifts. God gave His wisdom in fashioning the world, His strength in laying its foundation, His radiance in lighting it, His beauty in adorning it, His breath in making it fragrant. Does the earth need rain? God "giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields."³ Does it need seasons? "I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time."⁴ Do its inhabitants need life? Isaiah

² 1 Thess. 1 : 3.

³ Job 5 : 10.

⁴ Lev. 26 : 4, 5.

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declares, "He . . . giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein."⁵ Do they need strength? David sings, "The God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people."⁶ Do they need an abundance of wisdom and knowledge? Solomon boasts that "God giveth to a man that is good in His sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy."⁷ Do they need life eternal? Paul declares, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."⁸

HOW GOD GIVES

An interesting thing about the love-gifts of God is the manner in which they are given. Lavatar said: "The manner of giving shows the character of the giver more than the gift itself." A forced gift is attended with ill grace. An awkward gift denotes lack of polish or self-control. A love-gift speaks in tenderness, and shows with politeness the feelings of the giver.

⁵ Isa. 42 : 5.

⁶ Ps. 68 : 35.

⁷ Eccl. 2 : 26.

⁸ Rom. 6 : 23.

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God's love-gifts are *diversified* and *gratuitous*. Paul, interrogating the Romans, said: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"⁹ Not that He is under obligation, but, loving us, such gifts are His supreme delight. These gifts come in all forms and for all classes, in demonstration of fixed laws of His bountiful provision.

Rowland Hill had two men in his congregation of opposite circumstances. One was rich, the other poor. The rich man placed a sum of money in Mr. Hill's hand for the poor man. It was not to be sent all at once. First was a note for five pounds with the endorsement: "More to follow." Every few months came the remittance with the same message: "More to follow." So with God's gifts. Not only are they free as the air we breathe, but each is prophetic of another supply already on the way.

⁹ Rom. 8 : 32.

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“ More and more, more and more,
Always more to follow ;
Oh, His matchless, boundless love !
Still there's more to follow.”

God's love-gifts are *liberal*. They are “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”¹⁰ He opens His hand, and the feathered songsters, the finny tribe, the beasts of hill and vale, are fed. From the heavenly storehouse He supplies the needs of His intelligent creatures, and to each these needs are supplied “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”¹¹

Back of the liberality and the number of God's gifts, is His profound love. Among the treasures that Dr. Joseph Parker used to show his friends was a check from a noted man, payable at the Bank of England. He would not cash it, saying: “This is too valuable to go over the counters of exchange;” and upon it he had written: “Payable at the bank of love — not negotiable.”

But God's bank-notes are all negotiable.

¹⁰ Eph. 3 : 20.

¹¹ Phil. 4 : 19.

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Love gave them, and love desires them cashed, and cashed now. Old Cornelius Vanderbilt was the rich man of his day; but when nearing death, he realized that he was a spiritual pauper. Turning his back on his ninety millions of dollars, he asked his Christian wife to pray, and to sing one of the old Christian hymns. Paupers we may be as regards this world's goods, but we can be rich because of this love-check of God.

When Lawrence was called before the emperor to give an account of the church treasures, he was asked where they were concealed. He answered that within three days he would show them. The third day following he gathered together the sick and the poor to whom he had dispensed alms, and placing them before the emperor, said: "Behold, here are the treasures of the church, the needs of whom have been supplied." And one glimpse of man is evidence that the outstretched hand of God discloses a loving heart as He scatters blessings as liberal as the sun's rays.

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“ Lord, I hear of showers of blessing,
Thou art scattering full and free,—
Showers the thirsty land refreshing,—
Let some drops now fall on me.”

God's love-gifts are *constant*. Not a day passes but He loads us with benefits. James Bundy, of Bristol, England, used to visit the markets once a week to aid the poor. If he saw a needy person looking at some necessary food, and inquiring its price, then turning away for lack of money to make the purchase, he would call him back, and ask, “ What can you afford to give for it? ” On being told how much, he would produce the additional sum, and enable the poor man to make the purchase. Our loving God goes farther, and gives the right things at the right time, and in the best way. It is “ day by day ”¹² that the clouds drop fatness; the sun imparts light and heat; the ships and trains come from every point of the compass, bringing furs from the arctics, fruits from the tropics, and cereals from the temperate zones. His gifts are so

¹² Luke 11 : 3.

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generous, exceeding in quality and quantity anything we could expect. They are gracious; for no one but a lover like God would give them when there is such lack of worthiness. They are so well adapted to our condition that they challenge our attention, and compel us continually to declare that "God is good."

God's love-gifts are *kingly*. Alexander the Great startled a noble captive by his generosity, when he said, "I give as a king." Alfred the Great retired to one of his strong castles when defeated by the Danes. A beggar came and asked alms. The queen informed her husband that they had but one loaf, which was insufficient for them and their friends, who were gone abroad in search of food, with little hope of success. The king said to his wife, "Give the poor man half the loaf. He who could feed the five thousand with five loaves and two small fishes can make the remaining half-loaf meet our necessities."

A story is told of a poor woman who looked longingly at the flowers in a king's garden,

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wishing to buy some for her sick daughter. She was repelled by the gardener, who rudely told her, "The king's flowers are not for sale." The king, chancing to pass, plucked a bouquet, and gave it to the wistful woman, saying: "The king does not sell his flowers; he gives them away." How much like our loving Father; for when He gives, it is with a kingly spirit, and from His kingly storehouse of abundance. All life, all health, all freedom, all sustenance, come from Him. "The silver is mine," says He, "and the gold is mine."¹³ "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills."¹⁴ "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."¹⁵ "I the Lord do all these things."¹⁶

HOW, WHAT, AND WHEN WE SHOULD GIVE

A gift is something voluntarily given by one to another without compensation. But is it right to receive all, and give none, when

¹³ Haggai 2 : 8.

¹⁴ Ps. 50 : 10.

¹⁵ Ps. 34 : 10.

¹⁶ Isa. 45 : 7.

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one has plenty? "He respecteth not the gifts," said Thomas a Kempis, "but turneth himself above all good unto the Giver." Love is like an echo,— it returns what it receives. Without the reflex influence of giving, one becomes an ungrateful miser. This is why so many who enjoy God's love-gifts seldom reciprocate. They accept all as a matter of course, but to give back is out of the question. Should it not be done? Will not gratefulness prompt it? Will it not specify *how* to give, *what* to give, and *when* to give to God? The "how" will show the spirit, the "what" the value, and the "when" the time to give.

How give? — *Cheerfully!* The grudging gift is not acceptable to God. He gives to us as if we were kings; too many of us give to Him as if He were a beggar. He gives to us the things that He values the highest; too many of us give Him those things we can do without. He gives as if it were part of His life's existence; we give as if it would be our destruction. What a contrast! His are as freely and bountifully given as the manna

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to Israel; ours as ungraciously and with as little faith as Cain's.

One cold, dark evening a shop-girl was hurrying home after a hard day's work. She was poorly dressed, and every gust of wind sent a chill through her delicate body. A blind man sat in the alley by the pavement, silently offering pencils for sale to the heedless crowd. He had no overcoat. His thin hand clasped with purple fingers the wet, sleet-covered pencils. The girl passed the man. About half a block away she fumbled in her pocket, and, turning, walked back. For a moment she looked intently at the vender of the pencils; and when she saw that he gave no sign, she quietly dropped a ten-cent piece into his hand, and walked away. Soon she stopped, turned, and walked rapidly back to the dark alley, and the man half hiding in it. Bending over him, she said, softly, "Are you really blind?"

With an indescribable gesture he pointed to his breast. There hung the dull badge of the Grand Army of the Republic.

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“ I beg your pardon, sir,” she humbly said.
“ Please give me back my ten cents.”

“ Yes, ma'am,” he answered, and held out the coin.

She took out her purse. It was a very thin one. It contained but three silver dollars. She put one dollar of her little store,— just one third of her week's hard earnings,— into his hand, with the words, “ Take this instead, for the dear Lord's sake, and go home now. You ought not to sit here in the bitter wind and sleet.” Then she turned her steps homeward, pitying the wretched man, and thinking that no one had seen her. But God — that loving, tender God, who values quality rather than quantity — noticed not only the gift but the spirit of cheerfulness with which she gave, and credited it to her eternal account.

What give? — God asks the heart. Giving that, we give all, and in so giving we shall find it more to our advantage than His. Like the pupil who said to Socrates, when others were giving rich gifts, “ I have nothing to give but myself,” we shall find in reality that God will

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do as the philosopher answered, "I will endeavor to give thee back to thyself better than I received thee." It is said that Robert Bruce was anxious that his heart be buried in the Holy Land. Isabella, the daughter of the Earl of Pembroke, wanted hers interred in Tewksbury Cathedral. Lord Windsor, dying in a foreign land, ordered his to be buried in Bradenham Chapel, England. How much better to place it in God's hand, especially as He requests it. That is what David did when he said, "My heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."¹⁷ Sing! of course he could. "When there is love in the heart, there are rainbows in the eyes," sunshine in the face, and music on the lips. We can give our hearts to God. Then come, dear one, and present thy heart to Him, saying,—

"'Tis all the sacrifice I bring;
Thou God of grace, wilt not despise
A broken heart for sacrifice."

Then you will pray and promise —

¹⁷ Ps. 57: 7.

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“O, may Thy love inspire my tongue!
Salvation shall be all my song,
And all my powers shall join to bless
The Lord, my strength and righteousness.”

When give? There is but one season in which God deals with man, and that is NOW. What a word! All God's love, all eternal happiness, all hope of salvation, hinge on that word! NOW is the pivot on which destiny turns. NOW is the market in which to buy the kingdom of God. NOW is the time to become Godlike. Now, or it may be never. For —

“The moment we forego
Eternity itself can not retrieve.”

“I wasted time,” said Richard III., “and now doth time waste me.” Take warning, then, and —

“Seize the present hour,
The Saviour's grace to prove;
He can relieve, for He has power;
He will, for He is love.”

When the “Rio de Janeiro” struck the rock at the entrance of San Francisco harbor

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that chill February night in nineteen hundred two, a hundred and twenty-eight lives were lost. Consul-General Wildman and family, of China, were aboard. Quartermaster Lindstrom, who was the last white man to leave the ship, said that Mr. Wildman lost his life, and caused the death of his wife and children, by remaining on board long after he could have gone in a boat. The captain offered the Wildmans the first chance in the boats; but Mrs. Wildman refused to go without her husband. Later, Mr. Wildman urged her to go, and while she was preparing to get into the boat, the ship sank, and all perished. Hesitation on the part of one not only meant death to that one, but it involved others. Hesitation on your part to give your heart to God may mean not only the loss of your own soul, but the loss of other souls. O, make the right decision now! give your heart to Him to-day!

“ Give, for God to thee hath given ;
Love, for He by love is known ;
Child of God, and heir of heaven,
Let thy parentage be shown.”

V

THE LOVER'S GIFT—"HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON"

GREAT is the diversity of gifts! Many are ordinary, some extraordinary. All cost something, few everything. Frequently the gift outlasts the giver, the love outlasts both. Roses fade, yet their perfume rises to permeate and purify the atmosphere. Sunbeams dance not in vain; for, like the artist's brush, they leave a variety of color on every leaf, blade, and face they touch. Nothing single exists. Everything is composed of elements or influences which date back into the past, and reach forward into the future. Cause and effect go hand in hand. Love and gifts are inseparable as sun and light. Because God was love, He gave; and because He still loves, He gives. Love's arithmetic is that of addition. It gives to give. God gave Jesus, Jesus gave Himself. Like a double

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flower, inseparable in the arrangement of its petals, so the Godhead is inseparable in love. Love was the glorious principle which prompted God to give His Son, and love was the impelling motive that brought that Son to us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."¹ "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor."² Failure to recognize the indissoluble relation of God and Jesus, means failure in the comprehension of John three-sixteen. "I and My Father are one,"³ is the principle by which the mystery of redemption is solved. God was no more willing to give Jesus than Jesus was willing to give Himself. The desire to give was mutual. Both loved with the same intensity, loved the same object, and loved with the same purpose,—the salvation of those scarred and cursed by sin. God's love is the prominent feature of the Golden Text, and no less is Christ's; for it—

¹ 1 John 4: 10.

² Eph. 5: 2.

³ John 10: 30.

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. . . "shines in Jesus' face,
The brightest image of His grace;
God, in the person of His Son,
Has all His mightiest works outdone."

Vincent de Paul was educated for the priesthood. While on his way to Marseilles, the ship on which he journeyed was captured by pirates, and he with others was taken to Tunis, and sold as a slave. After serving a few years as a physician's clerk and farm-hand he escaped, crossing the Mediterranean in a small boat, and landed near Aigues-Mortes. At Marseilles he was moved by the hardships of a prisoner whom he saw on one of the prison ships. It did not take him long to learn from the records that he was a political prisoner. One fine morning Vincent de Paul ascended the side of the ship. The prisoner, heavily chained, stood leaning against the bulwarks, gazing longingly toward the land. The tender green that clothed field and forest, the brightness of the sun-kissed waves, all the loveliness of nature, only intensified the despair of the man's face and attitude. De Paul questioned him. The convict evaded

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the interrogations until love, beaming from eye and ringing in voice, touched his heart and lips. "My wife and children, they will starve," he said. "Were I at liberty, I could care for them; but now ——" and an agonized gesture finished the sentence. Vincent de Paul's face was transformed. Sadness gave place to a beauty of holiness. "Be brave, my brother," he said, as he clasped his hand over the manacled one of the prisoner. "God bids me tell you to hope." A few days elapsed, and the captive was with his family. Vincent de Paul by some means had taken his place.

Did Christ, our blessed Lord, do less? Did He not see humanity shackled by sin? Did He not hear the cry of despair? Did not that unequalled love which angels never comprehended, prompt Him to take their place, bear their burdens, weep their tears, and share their heartaches? — Yes!

"With pitying eyes the Prince of grace
Beheld our helpless grief:
He saw, and — O, amazing love! —
He saw to our relief."

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THE GIFT OF GOD

The gift of God was specific and unspeakable. He gave *His only begotten Son*. Abraham was willing to give his son to please God; God was willing to give His Son to appease sin. When He saw the world steeped in wickedness, and violated justice demanded the destruction of the human family, He knew but one way of recourse, and that was sacrifice. Thus He spared not His —

. . . “only Son,
But gave Him for the world undone,
And freely with that blessed One
Gave all.”

This gift was not the result of a moment's thought, but long-premeditated, long-promised. Before our first parents were expelled from Paradise, an assurance was given of One who should bruise the serpent's head. Abraham rejoiced that through his family all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. Dying Jacob, in his benediction upon Judah, declared, “The scepter shall not depart from

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Judah, nor a lawgiver from between His feet, until Shiloh come.”⁴ Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah, wrapped in prophetic vision, tell of His glorious appearance: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”⁵ “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment in the earth.”⁶ “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, . . . out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.”⁷

Such a Gift! Before it the angels were compelled to pause. The queen of Sheba gave Solomon spices, gold, and precious stones. Herod offered Salome half of his kingdom. But contemplate God's gift for a moment. It is the manifestation of the greatest love, such as never was before or since. It was not money nor lands, men nor angels, but His Son, “the Lord of Glory,”⁸ the “King

⁴ Gen. 49 : 10.

⁵ Isa. 7 : 14.

⁶ Jer. 23 : 5.

⁷ Micah 5 : 2.

⁸ James 2 : 1.

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of Glory,"⁹ the "Mighty God,"¹⁰ the Eternal Logos, "Lord of lords,"¹¹ and King of kings. How great the gift! In this gift how great the evidence of God's love. Wonderful! Amazing!

While an evangelist read and explained John three-sixteen at a street meeting, a hard-hearted man stepped up to him, and said: "I'm a bad man, I've committed almost every crime, but I have two little boys, and I love my boys. I wouldn't give one of them for the best friend I've got. When you said that God so loved me that He gave His Son, that broke my heart." And it ought to break any heart; for love so excelling was never shown as when God "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all."¹²

Such a Gift! Heaven would have each one consider that this Gift is God's begotten and beloved Son, "the first-begotten"¹³ unto the world; the "beloved Son," in whom He is well pleased.¹⁴ This word "begotten" tells

⁹ Ps. 24 : 10.

¹⁰ Isa. 9 : 6.

¹¹ Rev. 17 : 14.

¹² Rom. 8 : 32.

¹³ Heb. 1 : 6.

¹⁴ Matt. 3 : 17.

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of that free and mysterious relation between God and Christ,— a relation that finite minds can not determine, nor finite tongues explain, — a relation which is the resplendence of the Godhead; “the brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of His person,”¹⁵ “all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,”¹⁶ “made in the likeness of man,”¹⁷ “God . . . manifest in the flesh.”¹⁸

In spite of skeptical and liberalistic denunciations, the divinity of Jesus stands forth prominently in the Scriptures. His humanity without His deity is “a casket without a pearl, a shrine without its Shekinah.” John Baptist beheld Him, and said, “I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”¹⁹ Peter, associated with Him, declared, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”²⁰ The centurion, standing at the cross, confessed, “Truly this was the Son of God.”²¹ The devils who fled at His word acknowledged, “Thou art Christ, the Son of God.”²² The

¹⁵ Heb. 1 : 3.

¹⁶ Col. 2 : 9.

¹⁷ Phil. 2 : 7.

¹⁸ 1 Tim. 3 : 16.

¹⁹ John 1 : 34.

²⁰ Matt. 16 : 16.

²¹ Matt. 28 : 54.

²² Luke 4 : 41.

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eunuch, embracing the Christian faith, said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."²³ William E. Gladstone, responding to an inquiry concerning his Christian belief, wrote, "All I think, all I hope, all I write, all I live for, is based upon the divinity of Jesus Christ, the central joy of my poor, wayward heart." Glorious testimonies! To think that "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,"²⁴ should give Himself for sinful men, transcends all admiration.

Such a Gift! Ponder Him a moment longer. He is God's *only* Son. The limitations of that word "only" are circumscribed by the whole of God's love. Only through Him can we love; only by His love are we free from condemnation; only in His love have we access to God; for "no man," said Jesus, "cometh unto the Father, but by Me."²⁵ "None to spare," is the answer of struggling parents when solicited for one of their children; but to give up the only one,— what pain, what sorrow, must it have caused!

²³ Acts 8 : 37.

²⁴ John 1 : 14.

²⁵ John 14 : 6.

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A father and mother had four children. Disease entered their home. One, two, three, of the children died. A short time afterward the only remaining son came running in from the field. His foot pained him. Evidently it had been bitten by a rattlesnake. In a short time it began to swell, and soon the lad died. The mother said to the writer: "It is so hard, but God's will be done." A Moravian mother had three sons, one of whom gave himself to missions. Sometime afterward a friend called upon her with sadness in his looks. "Your son," said he, "is gone."

"Is Thomas fallen asleep through the missionary life? Would to God that he would call my son John!"

John was called. He went, he fell. This time the committee was very sad; but, before uttering a word, the aged mother, anticipating the story, exclaimed:—

"Thank God! Oh, that he would call my last son, William!"

William was called. He, too, went and soon died, and that mother said, "Would that I had a thousand sons to give to God!"

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Give to whom? — God! Yes, God the Father, who created them, and gladly receives to make them happy. But when He gave His “unspeakable Gift,”²⁶ He gave His all, His equal, “the Son of His love, who was ever with Him, and ever His delight.” He gave Him not to be elevated to a throne, or to be free from care and pain, but to be “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,”²⁷— a servant to toil and suffer, and at last to be a sacrifice for sin. Astounding gift — “an index of love too high, too deep, too divine, for mortals to comprehend.”

“O great heart of God! whose loving
Can not hindered be, nor crossed;
Love divine! of such great loving
Only mothers know the cost,—
Cost of love, which all love passing,
Gave a Son to save the lost.”

Investigation of the purpose for which God gave His Son will cause appreciation of that Son. Isaiah, looking down the stream of

²⁶ 2 Cor. 9 : 15.

²⁷ Isa. 53 : 3.

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time, said, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities."²⁸ He became man's substitute, and took —

"The dying traitor's place,
And suffered in his stead."

Eleanor, the wife of Edward the First of England, ventured her life to save that of her husband by sucking the poison from a wound made by a poisoned dagger. The emperor of Austria conferred the Silver Crown of Merit upon a young soldier, who, finding a young shepherdess that had been bitten by a viper, sucked the poison, thus saving her life, but rendering himself a life-long invalid. Both jeopardized their lives for others.

Dr. Franz Mueller, of Vienna, died of bubonic fever. When his friend, Dr. Borisch, fell a victim to that disease, he nursed him until death came, exposing with generous self-renunciation his own life in so doing; then, attacked by the fever himself, he devoted the short time that remained to him to recording for the benefit of others the result

²⁸ Isa. 53: 5.

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of his scientific observations. "I am suffering from the plague," was the message he posted on the window-pane. "Please do not send a doctor to me, as, in any event, my end will come in four or five days." A sacrifice for his colleague.

William Phelps and James Stansbury were cleaning the inside of an eight-foot boiler at the cereal mills in Indianapolis. An employee, thinking the stop-cock was tight, turned on the steam, which poured in upon them. The only exit was up a ladder to a man-hole in the top. Both jumped for the ladder. Phelps reached it first, but, stepping aside, shouted: "You go first, Jim, you are married." Stansbury escaped, slightly burned, but poor Phelps, before he reached the top of the ladder, was so fearfully scalded that the flesh was dropping from his limbs. He lived but two hours, and those were hours of agony. Before dying, he said: "It was Jim's right to go first. He's married." A sacrifice for a fellow workman.

Thomas Hovenden, the artist of "Break-

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ing Home Ties," saw little Bessie Peifer crossing the railroad tracks near Norristown, Pennsylvania, when a fast train was bearing down upon her. When the engineer saw the little figure standing between the rails, he blew his whistle freely, but the child, becoming confused, did not avoid the train. Instantly Mr. Hovenden rushed forward, and seized the little girl in his arms; but before he could make the leap that would have saved them both, the engine struck him, and hurled him with terrific force across the track. The engineer stopped his train as soon as possible, and with his fireman ran where Mr. Hovenden and the little girl were lying side by side. Both were dead. One the sacrifice for the other.

But when God gave His Son, it was a sacrifice the most painful, that sinners and traitors might be reconciled to Him. He gave life to redeem life. He demonstrated love to magnify God's love in the design of human redemption, hesitating at no peril, nor pausing at the greatest sacrifice. "Greater

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love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”²⁹ “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”³⁰

Have you not read the story? It is without parallel in fact or fiction,—the most unique in history. It is not akin to the hemlock poison that Socrates drank, or the stake at which Latimer was burned. The flamed lamb on the altar, the brazen serpent elevated in the wilderness, the smitten rock in the desert, the Paschal blood on the doors, are but faint types of Him “who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.”³¹ Pass over His incarnation,—the mystery of wisdom and love,—and the life of humbling preparation for the cross. Give but one glance at His agony in Gethsemane, when “His sweat was as it were great drops of blood.”³² Stay not

²⁹ John 15 : 13.

³⁰ Rom. 5 : 7, 8.

³¹ 1 Peter 2 : 24.

³² Luke 22 : 44.

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in the judgment hall to watch the proceedings of derision that marred His visage more than any man, and "His form more than the sons of men."³³ But rivet your attention on "the Lamb of God"³⁴ hanging there on the cross, stained with blood. See the crimson mark on His cheek, and the life-giving fluid oozing from His hands and feet, which had been penetrated by spikes. The mouth is parched, the eyes are bloodshot, and the sensitive frame twitches with cruel pain. The oriental sun, beating down on the unprotected head, produces fever, and a throbbing which seems as if it would burst the skull. The breath comes in gasps, and every straightened movement for relief aggravates the pain. The Victim experiences David's prophecy: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death."³⁵ The bosom heaves and falls,

³³ Isa. 52 : 14.

³⁴ John 1 : 29.

³⁵ Ps. 22 : 14, 15.

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the lips move, and as the Son of God cries, "It is finished,"³⁶ He leaps into the "Thermopylæ of man's moral destiny," meets the cost at an awful expense, but makes salvation free. Was not that an exhibition of unparalleled love — a love stronger than death itself? Contemplate that crucified Christ a moment. Is not that sight enough to melt the hardest heart, and make the strongest weep? Blessed Jesus! What love to wear a crown of thorns that we might wear a crown of glory; to bleed Thy life's blood that our sins might be washed away; to take our place and die that we might live. Wonderful, sublime love!

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did ere such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

The cross! in which our faith centers, from which poets, artists, and orators draw their inspiration, is "the highest, the most complete, manifestation of the love of God." If "divine love in the incarnation appears like

³⁶ John 19: 30.

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the brilliant star the wise men saw in the east, the crucifixion, with all its indignities and agonies, appears like the sun ablaze, filling the universe with its matchless radiance." There, and there alone, was atonement made for the sins of the world. There, and there only, was man's substitute for sin. There "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him."³⁷ There God "spared not His own Son"³⁸ from pain and disgrace. There, He was "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."³⁹ There "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him."⁴⁰ There He died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."⁴¹ There "he died," as Kingsley said, "because He was love, love itself, love boundless, unchangeable; love which inhabits eternity, and therefore could not be burdened by any sin or rebellion of man;" but loved man so much as "to give His life a ransom" for him. Dead! Think of it! Jesus dead! "The hands that bestowed blessings upon the blind and hungry,

³⁷ Isa. 53 : 10.

³⁸ Rom. 8 : 32.

³⁹ Isa. 53 : 4.

⁴⁰ Isa. 53 : 5.

⁴¹ 1 Peter 3 : 18.

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dead! The tongue that uttered words that have become light for the ages, dead! He who wrested from death His prey, Himself dead!" Surely, if ever man escaped death, one would think Jesus should. But no, He died, and His death was not for friends only, but enemies; not for the righteous, but sinners. What love!

"Which of all our friends, to save us,
 Could or would have shed his blood?
But our Jesus died to have us
 Reconciled, in Him, to God;
This was boundless love indeed;
Jesus is a friend in need."

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THIS GIFT?

What shall we do with this Gift? It is optional whether we accept or reject Him. We might advise ourselves as the daughter of paganism advised her husband: "Have thou nothing to do with that Just Man;"⁴² or, like Paul, we may yield to the love of Christ, which constraineth us.⁴³ To reject it

⁴² Matt. 27 : 19.

⁴³ 2 Cor. 5 : 14.

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is to invite all the wrath of God to befall us. To accept it is to inherit the most sublime happiness heaven can bestow, to be emancipated from a life-long bondage, and to have conferred on us "a life which is beyond the conditions or occasions of dissolution." Which shall it be? "I have set before you," says God, "life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."⁴⁴

Friend, what will you do? Does not His love awaken your love? Hear him say, "I have called you friends."⁴⁵ O, how much that expression means; for the word is derived from *philos*, meaning "lover"—"I have called you lovers." How beautiful! We call a lover of wisdom a "philosopher," a lover of men a "philanthropist," but a thousand times better is it if you can be called a "philochristos,"—a lover of Christ. Are you such?

"To-day a pardoning God
Will hear the suppliant pray;
To-day a Saviour's cleansing blood
Will wash thy guilt away."

⁴⁴ Deut. 30 : 19.

⁴⁵ John 15 : 15.

VI

THE LOVER'S PROVISIO—"WHOSO- EVER BELIEVETH"

LOVE is the lodestone of love. It is a magnet by which many are unconsciously and involuntarily drawn. Nothing is so universal, so great, so strong. "It sings," as Campbell Morgan says, "in poetry, and forgets calculation. It worships in abandonment, and oversteps arithmetic. It is a vestal flame of life," the bond of heaven, and the only true bond of earth.

Love precedes love's gifts. The former is gratuitous; the latter are conditional. God loved before He made the world, loved before He gave His Son to die for those in the world; but in this beautiful declaration of John three-sixteen, faith is the condition whereby this precious Gift may be received. On the correctness of one's belief in Christ depends his eternal salvation.

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After the battle of Pittsburg Landing, Dwight L. Moody visited the hospital by request of a wounded soldier, who wanted the great evangelist to help him die. Mr. Moody said: "I would take you right up in my arms, and carry you into the kingdom of God if I could; but I can't do it: I can't help you to die."

"Then who can?" asked the soldier.

"The Lord Jesus Christ," Mr. Moody answered; "He it was who came to this world for that purpose."

The soldier shook his head, and said, "He can't save me; I have sinned all my life."

"But He came to save sinners," Mr. Moody answered. Then he prayed with him, and read this third chapter of John. The eyes of the dying man were riveted on Mr. Moody till he came to the fourteenth and fifteenth verses. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that *whosoever believeth* in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

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“Is that there?” asked the soldier.

“Does it read that *whosoever believeth* shall have life eternal? Read it again.”

Mr. Moody read it three times. The face of the soldier brightened, his faith took hold of Christ, and his dying appearance seemed to say:—

“My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Saviour divine!

Now hear me while I pray,

Take all my guilt away;

O, let me from this day

Be wholly Thine!”

BELIEF ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION

While salvation is of Christ, belief on man's part is essential before the greatest gift of God is conferred. It is “the vital artery of the soul,” through which flows a great desire, like that of David, who said, “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.”¹ It is this desire that makes everything earthly unattractive,

¹ Ps. 42: 1.

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and aids in the cultivation of that sublime faith whereby a soul can accept Christ—the Lover's Gift.

Belief in Christ is necessary. So important is belief, that most of the chapters in John's Gospel contain the word, until he declares, "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."²

Belief, what is it? The lexicographer, defining it from an intellectual view, says, "The term may be used for full and unwavering acceptance of anything as true;" but in Christian theology it is the acceptance of all that God has said and revealed in Jesus Christ, in a practical sense. John Wesley was once engaged in a very important conference with some of his leading associates. Faith, or belief, was the subject under discussion. None being able to furnish a satisfactory definition, Mr. Wesley said, "Let us call in Mrs. _____," naming a woman of strong sense

² John 20: 31.

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and very deep piety. "She can tell us just what it is to believe," continued Mr. Wesley, "because she conscientiously exercises it." When asked to define belief, she replied, "It is taking God at His word." That's it,—believing what He says, and believing in the application of what He has said to us. Such belief is an active rather than a passive principle.

One unhappy delusion of many persons is a treacherous disbelief when they profess to believe. A company of ladies visiting a manufactory were conducted into the laboratory. The chemist showed them a vessel containing a certain solution. He explained its properties, and told them that by moistening the hand with it, molten lead could be taken up without pain or injury. He told them why it was that the hot lead could not burn flesh moistened with the solution. The visitors were greatly interested, and when asked by the professor if they believed him, declared they did. "Now," said he, "here is a caldron of molten lead. Who of you will handle it?"

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Not one responded. They shrank back from the seething mass, whose heat could be felt several feet away.

“ You say you believe what I told you; just try it,” he urged.

Not one dared venture. Then he dipped his hand into the solution, and, plunging it into the lead, declared it did not harm him. But though they protested that they believed, they would not make the experiment themselves. They thought they believed; but it was not the belief that would try. Alas, there are many who believe in Jesus as a historic character, as the Great Reformer, as the wonderful Miracle Worker, as the Saviour of the world; but they have not believed in Him to test His power to save them. Reader, how believest thou?

THE PERSON IN WHOM TO BELIEVE

To take God at His Word must be considered in a practical sense. Regarding the world, He says that it “ passeth away.”³ Of

³ 1 John 2: 17.

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the people in the world we read that "all we like sheep have gone astray."⁴ Of one who loves the world, John declares, "The love of the Father is not in him."⁵ Of sin we learn that it "bringeth forth death,"⁶ but that Christ "is the propitiation [or atoning sacrifice] for our sins."⁷ Regarding life eternal, the blessed Saviour declared, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent;"⁸ and the secret of knowing is given in John three-sixteen,—whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Believe in whom?—Jesus Christ, God's Son; Isaiah's "Lamb;"⁹ Haggai's "Desire of all Nations;"¹⁰ Pilate's "Just Person;"¹¹ Josephus's "Wise Man;" Porphyry's "Pious Man;" John Stuart Mills's "Guide of Humanity;" Robert Owens's "The Irreproachable;" Leslie Stephens's "Ideal Man; therefore King of men;" and Edwin Arnold's—

⁴ Isa. 53 : 6.

⁷ I John 2 : 2.

¹⁰ Haggai 2 : 7.

⁵ I John 2 : 15.

⁸ John 17 : 3.

¹¹ Matt. 27 : 24.

⁶ James 1 : 15.

⁹ Isa. 53 : 7.

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“First-Born of Heaven, first soul of human souls,
That touched the top of manhood, and from height
Of Godlike, pure humanity, reached God.”

Such was the world's noble substitute and sacrifice for sin,—a substitute of flesh and blood, in which is wrapped up the admirable, divine love of God; yes, *God Himself*. To believe in Him is to know His transforming power. Such belief admits a radiance “amid the darkness of mortality, dispels the gloom that overspreads the mind, and dissipates the darkness that hovers around the pathway to immortality.”

“A bleeding Saviour, seen by faith,
A sense of pardoning love;
A hope that triumphs over death,
Gives joys like those above.”

When Munkacsy's great painting of “Christ before Pilate” was on exhibition in Toronto, a rude, rough sailor went to see it. He stood for a moment looking at the canvas as if he would glance at it and go away. But as he looked, he could not turn. He stood there with his eyes fixed upon that central

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figure of majesty and love. In a moment he took off his hat, and let it fall to the floor. He then picked up the book which described the picture, and began to read, ever and anon turning to the canvas, and toward the central figure. A woman, watching him, saw him lift his hand, and wipe away the tears. At last he arose, and coming softly and reverently toward the door, hesitating, to take the last look, said, "Madam, I am a rough, wicked sailor; I have never believed in Christ. I have never used the name except in an oath; but I have a Christian mother, and she begged me to-day, before I went to sea, to go and look at the picture of Christ. To oblige her I came. I did not believe that anybody believed in Christ; but as I have looked on that form, I have thought that some man must believe in Him, and it has touched me, and I have come to believe in Him too."

"Believe! and the 'feeling' may come or may go;
Believe in the Word that was written to show
That all who believe, their salvation may know;
Believe, and keep right on believing!"

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Ethan Allen, the New England infidel, was called to his dying daughter's side. "Papa," she said, "I am going to die. Mama says there is a Christ and a hereafter — if I trust Him. You say there is no hereafter. I am dying, papa, and I must make my last decision now. Whom shall I believe? Shall I accept mama's Christ, or your infidelity?" The great soldier's frame shook with emotion. He had just finished his famous book called "Reason, the Only Oracle of Man;" but turning from that, he said, "My darling, you would better die in your mother's faith, and not in *my unbelief.*" Why? — Because unbelief in Christ is disastrous and destructive, while belief on Him is comforting, elevating, purifying, and saving.

WHO MAY BELIEVE?

In making a will, special provision is made for sums of money or pieces of property to be given to certain persons. If not so designated, much trouble might arise as to who

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would be the rightful heirs. All men being God's children by creation, all have the privilege of inheriting "all things"¹² through Christ, if they so desire. This is proved by the word "*whosoever*," which, as Richard Baxter declared, "is the most comforting word in the Bible."

Divine love is all-embracing, including mankind of whatever color or rank, in whatever longitude or latitude, and of whatever station in life. Frederick Douglass proved that Lincoln believed this when he said that he was the first white man he ever talked with who did not seem to think of the difference in color between them, or to be conscious of the fact that he was a negro. But eighteen hundred years before the colored man's friend, was One who loved Jew and Gentile, Greek and Roman, white and black,— One who was subjected to ridicule and hatred, yet won mankind's affection by a love such as was never before or since exhibited. That one was Christ.

¹² Rev. 21 : 7.

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The story runs that an illiterate stone-breaker was given a tract by a stranger. During the meal hour he endeavored to read it, but was hindered by the word "whosoever." A boy passing was pressed into service, and asked to explain it. He spelled it out, —w-h-o- who, s-o- so, e-v-e-r- ever, whosoever.

"What does it mean?" asked the man.

"Indeed, I don't know," said the boy, "unless it means you and me and everybody else."

That's just what it does mean, thank God. "O Christ! take back my interest in Thy blood," prayed Charles Wesley, "unless it flows for all the race." As the worst character of the Israelitish camp was healed as quickly as the most moral serpent-bitten one by looking at the brazen serpent, so the meanest, the vilest, of human wretches can be made pure if only penitent, and believing in Christ crucified.

"Slain in the guilty sinner's stead,
His spotless righteousness I plead,
And His availing blood;

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That righteousness my robe shall be,
That merit shall atone for me,
And bring me near to God."

George Hunnowell had been in prison thirty years. He never expected to leave it. The governor pardoned one prisoner every year. One New-year's day the prisoners were assembled, and the chaplain said, "George Hunnowell, rise and receive the governor's pardon." The man did not move. The chaplain went toward him, and looking at him, said, "Will George rise?" The poor prisoner cried out, "Is it I? Is it I? I thought it was some other George Hunnowell."

When Henry Clay Trumbull was a prisoner during the Civil War, an influential friend at Washington persuaded the Government to take an interest in him, and secure his release. One day it was rumored that one man out of the nine hundred was to be released. Each said, "I wonder who it is? I hope it is I." In due time the officer came, and shouted at the top of his voice, "Henry Clay Trumbull, three paces forward!" No

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one moved. "Henry Clay Trumbull, three paces forward!" was repeated again. A man looked up the line, and seeing no one step forward, stepped himself.

"Why did you hesitate?" inquired the officer.

"Because I thought there might be another Henry Clay Trumbull," replied the pardoned soldier.

But in John three-sixteen there is nothing said of Hunnowells or Trumbulls. It reads "whosoever," and that carries more breadth and assurance than any earthly name. It shows no limitation with divine love, and no restriction in the divine offer. All can have a share, for Christ "gave Himself a ransom for all,"¹³ and tasted death "for every man."¹⁴

"Whosoever will," the promise is secure;

"Whosoever will," forever shall endure;

"Whosoever will," 'tis life for evermore;

"Whosoever will" may come.

¹³ 1 Tim. 2 : 6.

¹⁴ Heb. 2 : 9.

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INEXCUSABLENESS OF THOSE WHO PERISH

Salvation is so plainly stated in the Bible that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."¹⁵ Its conditions are so easy that all may be saved; but if any one will not meet them, Jesus has declared that he "shall be condemned,"¹⁶ and in stronger terms, he said, "He that believeth not *is* condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."¹⁷

Condemned! What a word! There is none more terrible of meaning in the English language. "Put all the afflictions and miseries of the world," said Flavel, "into one scale, and this sentence of God into the other, and they will be lighter than a feather." It is the final sentence of God. From man's condemnation God may justify, but from God's condemnation no man can deliver.

Unbelief is the sin of all sins, the occasion of all sins, and the soul-destroying sin. There is not another so execrable and abominable in

¹⁵ Isa. 35 : 8.

¹⁶ Mark 16 : 16, R. V.

¹⁷ John 3 : 18.

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the sight of God. It reflects the greatest dishonor upon Him, for it makes Him a liar. It darkens one's life, decreases one's happiness, and destroys one's soul. It is the "most *common* of all evils, the most *specious* of all evils, the most *offensive* of all evils, the most *fatal* of all evils," and, as Carlyle says, the "one thing without honor and smitten with eternal barrenness." Through unbelief Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and suffered, the murmuring Israelites were kept out of Canaan, the Samaritan lord perished at the gate of Samaria, Zacharias was smitten with dumbness, and Thomas with shame. Jesus goes so far as to say to the unbelieving sinner, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."¹⁸ And again, he "shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."¹⁹

The fact of unbelief and its reward remain the same. God's wrath is written upon the heart, as the handwriting of Belshazzar's doom was written upon the wall. Listen to what God says through Isaiah: "If ye will

¹⁸ John 8 : 24.

¹⁹ John 3 : 36.

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not believe, surely ye shall not be established.”²⁰ Paul declares that those who believe not, shall not “enter into His rest;”²¹ and John states that unbelievers “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”²² Awful thought! Terrible outlook for the unbelieving sinner!

“Hush,” you say, “that is too broad an assertion.” What! Going too far when God says so? Is the physician going too far when he tells the poisoned patient that unless he takes the remedy, he will die? Or the fireman when he says, “Let me lower you from this window, or you will perish in the flames”? Or the sailor who urges, “Let me put this life-buoy about you, or you will sink”? — No, no! we discern the truth, and are ready to meet the conditions.

Is God’s truth less? To believe is to be free from condemnation, and to be “justified from all things.”²³ But to believe not is to be annoyed by conscience in this life, and to hear

²⁰ Isa. 7 : 9.

²¹ Heb. 3 : 19.

²² Rev. 21 : 8.

²³ Acts 13 : 39.

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Christ say, in the Judgment, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."²⁴

A bookkeeper handed his employer a sheet, saying, "The trial-balance, sir." The merchant had dreaded to know the truth, but it was even worse than he feared. His frame shook, and his heart fainted under the revelation. He fell into a dangerous fever, and in his delirium kept repeating: "The trial-balance, the trial-balance." At length he began to mend. His mind turned from his accounts with men to his standing with God. His conscience condemned him, and he declared his trial-balance with God to be in a worse condition. "I know it," said he; "O, shall I be an everlasting bankrupt?" The thought troubled him. He pleaded for God's love, believed on Jesus, and the Holy Spirit changed the man's fear to an assurance of hope, his groans to praise, and his prospects of perdition to the hope of heaven. So Christ will change yours, dear friend, if you will let Him. In

²⁴ Matt. 25 : 41.

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the language of faith cry aloud, " Lord, I believe!" ²⁵ Do this, and you will be saved. Neglect it, and, alas, your doom is sealed.

" There is a line by us unseen,
That crosses every path,—
The hidden boundary between
God's patience and His wrath.

" How far may we go on in sin?
How long will God forbear?
Where does hope end? And where begin
The confines of despair?

" An answer from the skies is sent:
' Ye that from God depart,
While it is called to-day, repent,
And harden not your heart.' "

²⁵ Mark 9 : 24.

VII

THE LOVER'S PURPOSE —“ SHOULD NOT PERISH ”

LOVE is a means to an end. Its influence is magical, its power transforming. Discouragements are by it quickly dispelled, like mists before the morning sun. On the face of the frowning sky, love spreads a rainbow of hope. There is not a fire too hot, a prison too strong, a mountain too high, an ocean too wide, nor an undertaking too perilous, to restrain it.

“ Love will find its way
Through paths where wolves would fear to prey.”

Everything the eye can see, the ear hear, the tongue taste, and the hands feel, has a purpose, whether we discern it or not. There is a divine wisdom in all things, and “ every purpose is established by counsel.”¹ Many a seeming catastrophe has proved a benediction in disguise. Behind the dark

¹ Prov. 20 : 18.

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clouds of human events is the silvery lining of Providence. The death-knell of Waterloo was the peace-chime of Europe. The arrest of Oliver Cromwell for debt as he was seeking passage to America, was the restraining hand to make him England's deliverer. The breaking of Bernard Gilpin's leg on his way to London, saved him from a martyr's fire. The changing of chairs saved the life of John Knox from the evil purpose of a would-be-murderer, who, noting the particular spot where Knox was accustomed to sit, sent a bullet through the window. Taking a different road to church saved Howard, the philanthropist, from assassination by a man whom he had reproved for dissolute habits. The missing of a Boston train by Amanda Smith, and the breaking of her engagement at an important meeting, preserved her life, while the train dashed to ruin.

Were these incidents the result of mere chance? — Nay, no more than God's sending Christ was chance, no more than Christ's suffering and death were chance. " For this

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purpose the Son of God was manifested,"² that love, at the greatest sacrifice, should save the human family from the greatest calamity, thereby extending to them the greatest blessing conferred by God,—salvation from perishing, and life eternal, "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."³

MAN IN A PERISHING CONDITION

Doubtless the most calamitous word of John three-sixteen is "perish." But, as a dark background sets off a light picture, so the sadness, misfortune, peril, and death connected with this word aid in beautifying the contrast,—life, eternal life.

Every non-Christian member of the human family is in a perishing condition, whether he realizes it or not. Because the sleeper was unconscious of escaping gas, and singing Evangelist Bliss uninformed of the washout of Ashtabula Bridge, is that to say they were not in a perishing condition? Because one

² 1 John 3 : 8.

³ Eph. 3 : 11.

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has health, home, means, title, friends, do these things make his condition spiritually any better? — Nay, for the Bible teaches, and daily evidence proves, that in the midst of life, man is in death. It —

“Rides on every passing breeze
And lurks in every flower.”

Did all unconverted realize this, then would the cry be raised, “Lord, save us: we perish.”⁴
And the prayer of each would be —

“Master, with anguish of spirit
I bow in my grief to-day;
The depths of my sad heart are troubled;
O, waken and save, I pray!
Torrents of sin and of anguish
Sweep o'er my sinking soul;
And I perish! I perish! dear Master;
O hasten, and take control.”

It is a good thing to realize this condition, for it arouses to action. It will man the life-boat, climb the fireman's ladder, fight wild beasts, go on half rations, strain every nerve, conquer every difficulty.

⁴ Matt. 8: 25.

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When the elder Dionysius was ruler of Syracuse, there was at his court a flatterer called Damocles, who lived by fawning on royalty. Cicero tells how one day while this parasite was extolling the greatness of the tyrant, and congratulating him upon the possession of so much wealth and happiness, Dionysius proposed that Damocles taste the sweets of power in place of himself for a while. So the courtier was seated at a magnificent banquet, with everything that could please and delight. Happening to glance up at the ceiling, he beheld a naked sword suspended above him by a single horse-hair. That very moment his pleasure vanished. So would the pleasure of the drunkard with his cup, the miser with his gold, the proud-spirited with his dress, the giddy with his frivolous diversions, the sinner with his views and actions, if he could but see the sword of justice above him, held by Infinite Love.

To perish, in the sense of John three-sixteen, means more than the prodigal meant when he said, "I perish with hunger;"⁵ more

⁵ Luke 15: 17.

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than the mariners meant when they said to Jonah, "Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not;"⁶ more than the death suffered by millions who have perished by famine, pestilence, earthquake, storm, or the weapons of warfare.

Paul speaks of it as separation from God here and hereafter. "Who," said he, "shall be punished with *everlasting* destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."⁷ What a sad isolation! John, in the twentieth chapter of Revelation and the fifteenth verse, writes: "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." What a pitiful perishing scene is that! Jesus says of those who care not for Him and His people, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment."⁸ Are they not in a perishing condition when that sentence is pronounced?

God grant, reader, that you may not suffer the pangs of either. Too many, alas! perish at the threshold of salvation. A few years ago

⁶ Jonah 1: 16.

⁷ 2 Thess. 1: 9.

⁸ Matt. 25: 46.

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a Mr. Breedlove and his son, with Mr. Fish, a young man of wealth, perished on the Colorado Desert eighty miles west of Yuma. The position and condition of the bodies plainly told the cause of their death. The supply of water was exhausted. The elder Breedlove knew that at the base of Cocopali Mountain was a spring that never failed. The three men mounted their mules and started for this spring. The sun shone with intense heat, and the atmosphere was stifling. Soon Mr. Fish dropped from his mule, and as no assistance could be rendered him, the Breedloves hastened onward. The animals gave out, and were given their liberty. About three miles from the spring, young Breedlove dropped on the burning sand. Imagine the feelings of that father as he left his son, to seek the life-preserving liquid. His steady step showed determination, but a mile from the mountain he stumbled. When only a quarter of a mile from the spring, he had fallen, and the mark of the canteen on the ground showed that it had dropped from his hand. He must

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have risen with difficulty, and struggled on a little farther; but when found by the searching party, he was lying, face downward, within two hundred yards of the spring. Almost to the spring, yet perished!

The "Royal Charter" had sailed around the world, and was homeward bound. Arriving at Queenstown, a message was received that she would be at her dock in Liverpool the next morning. The Lord Mayor of Liverpool, with a band of musicians and thousands of people, waited to give her welcome home. But the "Royal Charter" went down in the night between Queenstown and Liverpool, with almost all on board. The wife of the first mate was a member of Dr. William M. Taylor's church in Liverpool, and he was delegated to convey the news to her. On ringing the door-bell, a bright-faced, sunny-haired little girl answered, and, seeing who it was, said: "O Dr. Taylor! I thought it was my papa. He is coming home to-day!" On stepping into the house, Dr. Taylor found the breakfast-table spread in the sitting-room,

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and the wife dressed to receive her husband. "You must excuse us," she said, for having the table here at this hour, but you know my husband is coming home to-day; and if you will stay, it will make the day like heaven." Taking both her hands in his, Dr. Taylor said, "My poor woman, the 'Royal Charter' went down last night, and your husband was lost, and can never come home again." She looked at him an instant; then, drawing her hands from his, shrieked: "O my God! so near home, and yet lost!"

The analogy is true spiritually. Hundreds, like the young ruler,⁹ are near the kingdom, and are loved as he was by Jesus, but perish rather than obey Him. They get a glimpse of the promised land, but never enter. Like Felix, they are "almost"¹⁰ persuaded, but perish. Is that your condition? If it is, lay down this book, fall upon your knees, and beseech God for Christ's sake to save you from that death of all deaths, when lost souls will cry out, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."¹¹

⁹ Mark 10: 21.

¹⁰ Acts 26: 28.

¹¹ Jer. 8: 20.

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THE LOVER'S DESIRE TO SAVE THE PERISHING

God being love, He desires to save all from perishing. "As I live," says God, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."¹²

"While God invites, how blest the day!
How sweet the gospel's charming sound!
Come, sinner, haste, O haste away,
While yet a pardoning God is found."

There are many things from which there is no such emphatic assurance of deliverance. God has not promised to save from all misfortunes, for they are incident to human life, and can not be repelled by fortitude, awed by greatness, or escaped by flight. Nor has He promised to save from every trouble, for "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."¹³ And "there is a sin unto death," of which John says: "I do not say that he shall pray for it."¹⁴ But from perishing,—this awful perishing of the soul,—Christ has agreed to deliver if man will meet the condi-

¹² Ezek. 33 : 11.

¹³ Job 5 : 7.

¹⁴ 1 John 5 : 16.

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tion, and that condition is faith in His power to rescue.

A company of women and children were standing upon the wharf of a fashionable watering-place awaiting a steamer, on which were their husbands and fathers, when a splash was heard, and the next moment revealed a young man struggling in the water. He could not swim, and in his frantic efforts to rescue himself, drifted into deeper water and farther from shore. The women looked for assistance. They found only one person who could render it — an old sailor, standing by motionless, and watching the poor man drown. They appealed to him in vain. As the young man arose the first time, a look of horror came over the little company, who were to be unwilling witnesses of his death. When all hope was gone, the brave sailor leaped into the water, and, as the youth rose for the last time, seized him, and bore him safely to shore. As the women gathered around him, he said, "I was compelled to wait until he had ceased trying to save him-

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self; for I could save him only when he was without strength.”

The same is true with Jesus. So long as unregenerate man endeavors to save himself, he can not be saved. He may resort to religious forms and ceremonies, like the Pharisees, whom Jesus called hypocrites and “whited sepulchres.”¹⁵ He may engage in deeds of mercy and acts of charity; but, like sinking Peter, he must stop his struggling, and, relying on Christ’s power and love to save, cry:—

“Author of faith, to Thee I lift
My weary, longing eyes;
O may I now receive that gift!
My soul without it dies.”

FAITH IN THE ATONEMENT

This faith is not alone in the Lover’s Gift, but in the work of that Gift. No man did so much for universal man. Demosthenes stirred the Athenians with matchless oratory, but “never man spake like this man.”¹⁶ Phidias charmed them with the magic of his

¹⁵ Matt. 23 : 27.

¹⁶ John 7 : 46.

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chisel, as he carved life-like figures from shapeless blocks of marble; but Christ by His miraculous art caused the people to exclaim: "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?"¹⁷ Apelles stirred their emotions by the exquisiteness of his brush, but Christ stirred the whole world by the power of His limitless love. It is a love that shines like a twinkling star in His incarnation, yet more like a brilliant sun in His propitiation for sin, when as "daysman," "mediator," and "surety," "charged with the arbitrament of the great controversy existing between God and man," He made an atonement on the cross whereby the government of God might be vindicated, sinners justified, saved, reconciled to God, and permitted to enter "into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."¹⁸

"Yes, the Redeemer left His throne,
His radiant throne on high;
Surprising mercy! love unknown!
To suffer, bleed, and die.

¹⁷ Matt. 13 : 54.

¹⁸ Heb. 10 : 19.

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“ He took the dying traitor’s place,
And suffered in his stead;
For sinful man,— O wondrous grace! —
For sinful man He bled.

“ O Lord! what heavenly wonders dwell
In Thy atoning blood!
By this are sinners saved from hell,
And rebels brought to God.”

The atonement, or as Dr. W. G. Moorehead calls it, the “at-one-ment,” whereby God and man are reconciled, is the greatest manifestation of divine love, which “pours a glory over all the attributes of God.” Viewed from the standpoint of human redemption, we see the Lover’s Gift in a new light. He it was who “was made sin for us,”¹⁹ “bore our sins,”²⁰ “died for our sins,”²¹ gave His life “a ransom for many,”²² through whom we have “remission of sins,”²³ and whose “blood cleanseth us from all sin.”²⁴

Is this not wonderful? To think that God’s only begotten Son would be willing to be

¹⁹ 2 Cor. 5 : 21.

²⁰ 1 Peter 2 : 24.

²¹ 1 Cor. 15 : 3.

²² Mark 10 : 45.

²³ Acts 2 : 38.

²⁴ 1 John 1 : 7.

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“stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted,”²⁵ for us! What nobleness of character! O my soul! contemplate it a moment! Unfold the anatomy of His heart’s anguish, or analyze the chemistry of its bruised emotions, if thou canst. Stand and gaze upon thy Beloved. What suffering! What tearing of impaled nerves, muscles, and tendons of hands and feet! What lines of blood on His noble brow and agonized face! What torture of wounds by unrepelled flies! What fevered lips and parched tongue, sending sick convulsions to the heart and dizziness to the brain! And was this for me, a sinner? “Stupendous miracle of moral legislation” to save my soul, inspire my faith, temper my fears, fill my heart with humility, peace, and love, and tune my lips to sing the psalms of praise!

“’Tis love! ’tis love! Thou diedst for me!
I hear Thy whisper in my heart;
The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
Pure, universal love Thou art;
To me, to all, Thy mercies move;
Thy nature and Thy name is Love!”

²⁵ Isa. 53 : 4.

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AN EMPHATIC UTTERANCE

The eagerness of the Lover and the Lover's Gift are so emphatic that "whosoever believeth in Him *should not* perish." His power to save is equal to His purpose, if sinful beings will only confess their perishing condition, and exercise faith in Him who is "mighty to save;"²⁶ for "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."²⁷ Blessed is he who with Charles Wesley will confess and pray,—

"I have long withstood His grace,
Long provoked Him to His face;
Would not hear His gracious calls,
Grieved Him by a thousand falls.

"Now incline me to repent;
Let me now my fall lament;
Deeply my revolt deplore;
Weep, believe, and sin no more."

When Alexander of Russia visited Napoleon at Toulon, the French emperor gave his illustrious visitor the privilege of liberating

²⁶ Isa. 63 : 1.

²⁷ Rom. 10 : 10.

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one convict among the galleys. Speaking to one whose intelligent look aroused his curiosity, he asked for what crime he suffered. In reply the convict told a long story of innocence, and how he was imprisoned by the testimony of false witnesses. To another, and another, and still another the prince went, only to learn that they had been unjustly condemned. At length he found a man whose countenance was sad. Inquiring into the cause of his punishment, the man replied: "I have been a vile wretch, and have deserved far more than my present punishment. I have set at open defiance the laws both of God and men, and am not fit to look upon the blue heavens or the green earth." The Russian monarch, pleased with this confession, said to his attendants: "Set this man free; he is in a fit state of mind to make a proper use of liberty." Turning to the convict, he said, "Go, use your liberty for God's honor, to whose clemency you owe it."

Such a confession is proof that one realizes his condition. The galley-slave never once

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thought that it would open to him the door of liberty; but the poor, perishing sinner may know, for Jesus has emphatically declared that if he will *believe* in His power and love to liberate from sin, he "*should not*" perish. And on this "should not," God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have set their seal. The Father — for our Saviour said, "My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."²⁸ The Son — "Should not perish." The Holy Spirit — "Whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."²⁹ Do you believe these declarations? While the assertions and promises of men may be mistrusted, you can depend on the word of these three,— the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,— for when the heavens and earth pass away, their words will still remain.

God grant you will show appreciation by believing the strong assertion of Jesus, thus meeting the condition. Then will you have

²⁸ John 10 : 29.

²⁹ Eph. 4 : 30.

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a taste of David's feeling when he was rescued: "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."³⁰ Stretch forth thy hands of faith, O unconverted soul! and thou shalt not perish. Make haste to be saved, as did some of the passengers when the packet-ship "Stephen Whitney" struck a rock on the coast of Ireland; for those that leaped instantly were saved; while those who hesitated were lost by the returning wave which carried the ship to doom. Thou wouldst be saved; why not *now*? If you will, Christ will be a Saviour; if you will not, He is your Judge.

A number of years ago a judge heard loud cries in the street, and, rushing to the door of his home, saw a horse dashing up the avenue with the carriage swerving right and left. He ran out, and as the frightened animal came up, he grasped the reins, and with

³⁰ Ps. 40 : 2, 3.

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no little risk and exertion saved the life of the coachman within. Months passed. Court was in session, and he was in the judge's seat. A trial had just ended, and a man had been found guilty of murder in the first degree. When asked if he had reason why sentence should not be passed upon him, he replied: "Judge, don't you know me? Don't you know me? I am the coachman you saved in that runaway." The magistrate looked sadly at him a moment, as he recalled the incident, and then said, "Ah! I was your saviour then; I am your judge now."

To reject Christ the Saviour now is to have Him our Judge by and by. To accept Him as our present Saviour is to have Him our Saviour in the day of judgment.

"Cast thy guilty soul on Him,
Find Him mighty to redeem;
At His feet thy burden lay,
Look thy doubt and fears away;
Now by faith the Son embrace,
Plead His promise, trust His grace."

VIII

THE LOVER'S PLEDGE—"HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE"

DIFFICULT as it is properly to define love, yet easily and gracefully will love enter into covenant with the object of its affection. It will unhesitatingly pledge, if there is the slightest possibility to perform. Friend pledges love to friend, lover to lover, and before the bridal altar, bride and groom solemnly plight their love to each other. In all its dealings, love "delights in endearments, in avowals of love."

When Damon was sentenced to death by Dionysius the tyrant, he was given the privilege of visiting his wife and children on condition that he would secure a hostage to take his place, and die in his stead in case he failed to return at the appointed time. Pythias consented, and Damon pledged his honor to be on hand at the time specified.

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While Pythias was in prison, the king visited and conversed with him about the motive that induced him to run this great risk. To the surprise of the king, Pythias expressed his wish to die, that the honor of Damon might be vindicated. He even prayed that the return of Damon might be prevented until after the execution. The fatal day arrived, the crowd had gathered, and Dionysius himself was present.

Pythias mounted the scaffold, and calmly addressed the multitude. He said: "My prayer is answered; for the winds have been contrary until yesterday. Damon, my friend, could not come. He could not conquer impossibilities. He will be here to-morrow, and the blood which is shed to-day shall have ransomed his life. Oh, could I erase from your bosoms every mean suspicion of the honor of Damon, I should go to my death as to my bridal. My friend will be found noble; his truth will be found unimpeachable. He is now on his way, accusing himself and the adverse elements, but I haste to

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prevent his speed. Executioner, do your office."

As he closed his speech, a man was seen in the distance on a rapidly running horse, and as he approached the crowd, he sent his shrill voice over the multitude of heads, saying, "Stop the execution!" He dismounted speedily, hastened to the side of Pythias, and, embracing him, said, "You are free, my beloved friend. I now have nothing but death to suffer, and am delivered from reproaches for having endangered a life so much dearer than my own." Pythias heard him, and said, "Fatal haste! Cruel impatience! What envious powers have wrought impossibilities in your favor? But I will not be wholly disappointed. Since I can not die to save you, I will not survive you."

As the king saw and heard, he was moved to tears. Ascending the scaffold, he cried, "Live, live, ye incomparable pair! Ye have borne unquestionable testimony to the existence of virtue. Live happy, live renowned." And, instead of an execution, there was a jubilation. Love conquered, and love's

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pledge, sacredly given, was sacredly kept.

God loved and pledged. He loved when man sinned, and pledged that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Christ loved and pledged. He loved a world of sinners lost, and loving them "unto the end,"¹ pledged that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Such a pledge is binding. Yes, when the beautiful sky with its glowing fires shall roll up like a scroll, and the earth with its snow-capped mountains, carpeted prairies, gorgeous cities, and placid rivers shall melt and burn with fervent heat, this pledge will still remain in force. Jesus, who is "the life,"² and who brought "life and immortality to light,"³ will substantiate His pledge.

"To love abundantly," said Drummond, "is to live abundantly; and to love forever is to live forever. Hence eternal life is inextricably bound up with love." In briefer words, love is life, life is God, "God is love."⁴

¹ John 13 : 1.

² John 11 : 25.

³ 2 Tim. 1 : 10.

⁴ 1 John 4 : 8.

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EVERLASTING LIFE

The pledge of John three-sixteen is that of life; in fact, the whole Bible is a message of life. In the Old and New Testaments the word "life" occurs four hundred times, and is mentioned in fifty-three of the sixty-six books. It is the "tree of life"⁵ in Genesis; the "path of life"⁶ in the Psalms; the "word of life"⁷ in John's Gospel; the "river of water of life,"⁸ "a crown of life,"⁹ and the "Lamb's book of life,"¹⁰ in Revelation.

Nothing is more valued and precious than life. Satan uttered a truth when he said, "All that a man hath will he give for his life."¹¹ Money, lands, even a part of his body, will one sacrifice for the extension and enjoyment of life.

Our lives, however, like Adam's, are circumscribed by the circle of a few years. The cradle and the tomb are only a span apart. No sooner does man begin to live than he begins to die. He is like the —

⁵ Gen. 2 : 9.

⁶ Ps. 16 : 11.

⁷ John 6 : 63.

⁸ Rev. 22 : 1.

⁹ Rev. 2 : 10.

¹⁰ Rev. 21 : 27.

¹¹ Job 2 : 4.

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. . . "summer rose,
That opens to the morning sky,
But ere the shades of evening close,
Is scattered on the ground — to die."

Like Paul, however, we may have the consolation of a life "hid with Christ in God,"¹² so that this transitory life of earth merges into the eternal life of the undying Christ; for "this is the promise that He hath promised us, even *eternal* life."¹³ And again, from the lips of Jesus: "I will give unto them *eternal* life."¹⁴

Note this word "eternal." A child may speak it, but even an angel's mind can not comprehend it. Its years are beyond computation. There is no figure by which we can grasp its duration. "All time, all history, all past cycles and ages, from the song of the morning stars till now, is but a dream when one awaketh," compared to that period which is God's lifetime, and through which all who believe in Christ shall live and love.

Over the doors of the Milan Cathedral are

¹² Col. 3: 3.

¹³ 1 John 2: 25.

¹⁴ John 10: 28.

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three inscriptions. The first reads: "All that which pleases us is but for a moment." The second is: "All that which troubles us is but for a moment." The third, over the great central arch, reads: "That only is important which is eternal." Blessed thought! "As our Lord pours out such noble gifts upon us in this life," said Luther, "how glorious will be eternal life!" It represents the greatest good forever,—activity and intelligence, intensity and aggression, an unending peace, a never-failing love.

Years ago a young woman left her widowed mother in the country, to obtain employment in a distant city. The mother grieved, for the girl went among strangers, and was surrounded by many temptations. For a time her letters were long and affectionate, but they grew shorter and shorter, and at last ceased. Word came to the mother that her child had left the path of virtue. She went to the city, but after days of fruitless search was about to return home in despair, when a new thought came. She had her

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photograph taken, and went to the principal saloons and places of resort, and asked them to hang the picture on the walls. The strange request was granted, and she went home with the prayer that Mary would see her mother's picture. One day the girl's attention was attracted by the likeness. She said, "That looks like my mother." She went nearer. "It *is* my mother," she said. Examining the picture, she noticed underneath, in the familiar handwriting, the words, "Mary, I love you still." These words rang in her ears and echoed in her soul. By them her life was transformed, and she began to love in return, and in the loving to live for time and for eternity. So Jesus loved, Jesus sought, Jesus spoke; and millions have turned to Him, and said, "Lord, . . . Thou hast the words of eternal life."¹⁵

"Eternal life Thy words impart;
On these my fainting spirit lives;
Here sweeter comforts cheer my heart
Than all the sound of nature gives."

¹⁵ John 6 : 68.

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THIS LIFE IS A GIFT

John three-sixteen might well be entitled the "love text," as it enshrines the greatest attribute of Jehovah, which is infinite in its range. In every word beats the great heart of God. In every thought shines the holy face of Jesus; and as an evidence of this, promises and gifts unfold their treasures as an incentive to holy living.

God gave Jesus, Jesus gave His all, and in the giving He gives a fulness of life. "The gift of God," said Paul, "is eternal life."¹⁶ "I am come," said Jesus, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."¹⁷ And, "this is the record, that God hath given to us *eternal life*, and this life is in His Son."¹⁸ "Hath given;" not will, or may, but *hath*. It is a gift not in contemplation, but in possession,—a gift of eternal existence and eternal happiness already begun. "Because I live," said Jesus, "ye shall live also."¹⁹ Pilgrims of earth, but citizens

¹⁶ Rom. 6 : 23.

¹⁷ John 10 : 10.

¹⁸ 1 John 5 : 11.

¹⁹ John 14 : 19.

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of heaven. In the world, but not of the world. Subject to the cold of its icy winter, the heat of its burning summer, assaulted by the blows of adversity, and assailed by the venomous shafts of the devil, yet all helpless to affect the life that we now live, which is the life of God.

THIS GIFT IS ONLY THROUGH GOD'S GREAT
GIFT

Everlasting life being a gift, it is only through God's "unspeakable Gift"²⁰ that we can receive it. "The gift of God is eternal life *through* Jesus Christ our Lord."²¹ "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."²² "I live," said Paul, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."²³ However bewildering it may seem, that the Christian's life is in Christ, and Christ's life is in the Christian, yet it is as plain as the branch living in the tree, and the tree living in the branch. When Christ lives in the Christian, it is "because He hath given us of His

²⁰ 2 Cor. 9 : 15.

²¹ Rom. 6 : 23.

²² 1 John 5 : 11.

²³ Gal. 2 : 20.

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spirit;”²⁴ when the Christian lives in Christ, it is because he “believes on His name.”²⁵ When Christ lives in the Christian, it is because “the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.”²⁶ When the Christian lives in Christ, it is because he “has been planted in the likeness of His death,” and shall be also “in the likeness of His resurrection.”²⁷ Christ in the Christian implies that He is “our life;” the Christian in Christ implies “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”²⁸ Christ in the Christian is a surety that he has been “made nigh by the blood of Christ,”²⁹ that he is an heir of God, and joint-heir with Jesus Christ;³⁰ the Christian in Christ will so live that men shall see his good works, and glorify his Father who is in heaven.³¹

Life is hidden. We see its result, but not its force. The piston-rod moves in and out in the cylinder, and by that movement turns

²⁴ 1 John 4 : 13.

²⁵ John 1 : 12.

²⁶ Rom. 8 : 10.

²⁷ Rom. 6 : 5.

²⁸ 1 Cor. 1 : 30.

²⁹ Eph. 2 : 13.

³⁰ Rom. 8 : 17.

³¹ Matt. 5 : 16.

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

the drive-wheels of the locomotive, but its steam-life is hidden. The grain of wheat, hard and to all appearance worthless, is committed to the soil. By and by up shoots a stalk, then an ear, then golden grains in the ear; but its growing life is concealed. The heart throbs, the pulse beats, the lungs expand, the limbs move, the frame shakes; but the dominating, controlling life-power is unseen. We note the Christian, his looks, his actions, and, marveling at his measure of love in a world of evil, we say, "How like Christ is he." Why? — Because, as Paul says, his "life is hid with Christ in God."³²

In the second century a martyr was brought before a king, who wanted him to recant, and give up Christ and Christianity. The king said, "If you do it not, I shall banish you."

The man smiled, and answered, "You can not banish me from Christ, for He says that He will never leave me nor forsake me."

The king became angry, and said, "Well,

³² Col. 3 : 3.

THE LOVER'S LOVE

I will confiscate your property, and take it all from you."

The man replied, "My treasures are laid up on high; you can not get them."

The king became still more angry, and said, "I will kill you."

"Why," the man answered, "I have been dead forty years; I have been dead with Christ; dead to the world; my life is hid with Christ in God, and you can not touch it."

Sublime thought! Christ being the source of the Christian life, it makes him secure. Christ having revealed only part of His glory here, our life in Him will not be manifested in all its grandeur till we dwell with Him in heaven. "Only the dull bud is seen as yet," said one; "by and by the flower will burst into rich bloom. No artist ever puts on canvas all the beauty of his vision. No singer ever puts into song all the music of his soul. No Christian ever translates into disposition and conduct all the spiritual loveliness that shows in his ideal."

A short time before the death of Louis the

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Thirteenth, his young son, five years of age, was brought to his bedside. "What is your name?" asked the languid monarch.

"Louis the Fourteenth," replied the boy, who had early learned the secret of his dignity.

"Not yet, not yet!" observed his sire.

The boy was but a child, a son, but he was also heir, and, as the bud comes to perfection in the blooming flower, and the half-seen moon rounds to its fulness, so in time Louis the son would be Louis the Fourteenth. "Now are we the sons of God," wrote John, "and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."³³

"Nor doth it yet appear
How great we must be made;
But when we see our Saviour here,
We shall be like our Head."

³³ 1 John 3:2.

THE LOVER'S LOVE

THE SECRET WHEREBY WE MAY KNOW IF
THIS PLEDGE INCLUDES US

Eternal life having been provided and promised through Jesus Christ, there is a secret by which we may know if this pledge includes us. "Verily, verily," said Jesus, "I say unto you, He that *believeth* on me *hath* everlasting life."³⁴ Two words in the present tense should not be overlooked in this connection,—"*believeth*," "*hath*." The one shows the simple yet mighty means whereby and whereon our eternal salvation depends — "*believeth*." The other is that of assurance — "*hath*." "These things have I written unto you, . . . that ye may know that ye *have* eternal life."³⁵ Too many live in the future. "I hope so," they say; "I think so"—never, "I *know*." But we *may* know, and such knowledge brings satisfaction. "I *know*," said Jethro, "that the Lord is greater than all gods."³⁶ "I *know*," said Job, "that my Redeemer liveth."³⁷ "I *know*," said Solomon, "that whatsoever God

³⁴ John 6: 47.

³⁵ I John 5: 13.

³⁶ Ex. 18: 11.

³⁷ Job 19: 25.

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

doeth, it shall be forever.”³⁸ “I *know*,” said the angel at the tomb, “that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.”³⁹ “I *know*,” said Paul, “whom I have believed.”⁴⁰ “I *know* my sheep,” said Jesus, “and *am known* of mine.”⁴¹

Such knowledge fringes every dark cloud with golden hues, dispels the gloom that overspreads the mind, deepens the affections, exalts the faculties, makes the Christian’s eye bright with hope, and illumines the pathway to immortality.

There is a legend among the Hebrews that two sisters on the night of Egypt’s desolation remained with the family within the home. One was prepared for the departure, and, filled with assurance and peace, calmly partook of the roasted lamb. The other was restless and fearful lest the death angel would not pass them by. She reproached her sister for being unconcerned and confident, and asked how she could be so full of assurance

³⁸ Eccl. 3 : 14.

³⁹ Matt. 28 : 5.

⁴⁰ 2 Tim. 1 : 12.

⁴¹ John 10 : 14.

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when death and judgment were being meted out to all around. The answer was, "Why, sister, the blood has been sprinkled; and we have God's word that when He sees the blood, He will pass over us."

To take God our Father at His word is the greatest honor we can accord Him. To believe in Jesus as our Saviour and Friend, is more pleasing than praying.

"Since Christ and we are one,
Why should we doubt or fear?
If He in heaven hath fixed His throne,
He'll fix His members there."

TO THOSE WHO HAVE NOT THIS LIFE

It may be, reader, you have not experienced this blessed relationship with Christ. If not, listen to a closing admonition. On one occasion a rich young ruler came to Jesus, and said, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"⁴² Doubtless you have asked the same great question. If not, then may the Holy Spirit assist you to ask it now, in all sincerity.

⁴² Luke 10 : 25.

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Paul exhorted Timothy to "lay hold on eternal life."⁴³ But how? As the drowning seaman lays hold of the life-line, so salvation is by faith, "Believe on Him," said the apostle, "to life everlasting."⁴⁴ And when you have "laid hold" by faith, then go forth to live, go forth to minister in the name of Jesus Christ; for what your life will count in God's sight here, so will it count in eternity. "He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."⁴⁵

To sow to the Spirit will not always meet the approval of men. Some will laugh and sneer; temptations will assail, and pleasures allure; it may be that friends, and even loved ones, will endeavor to deter you. But listen! Jesus speaks. Weigh every word, and then decide. "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."⁴⁶

⁴³ 1 Tim. 6 : 12.

⁴⁴ 1 Tim. 1 : 16.

⁴⁵ Gal. 6 : 8.

⁴⁶ Matt. 19 : 29.

THE LOVER'S LOVE

A pious old man, walking to church with a New Testament in his hand, was thus accosted, "Good morning, Mr. Price."

"Ah, good morning!" he responded. "I am reading my Father's will as I walk along."

"Well, and what has He left you?" said the friend.

"Why, He has bequeathed to me a hundredfold more in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting."

Profitable investment for earth, but thrice profitable for eternity! "In the world to come." What a phrase! What a prospect! How it makes the Christian's heart bound with joy. "The world to come,"—heaven,—that place where our Father's throne is established, and where all his children will one day stand "without fault before the throne."⁴⁷

"No joint-benumbing cold, nor scorching heat,
Famine nor age have any being there."

The city's walls and foundations are built of precious stones, and the streets are paved with gold. There is no need of the sun, for

⁴⁷ Rev. 14 : 5.

JOHN THREE-SIXTEEN

“the Lamb is the light thereof.”⁴⁸ There God’s people shall “hunger no more, neither thirst any more.”⁴⁹ But before the throne, on which Jesus will be exalted, they will bow the knee, and, casting their crowns at His feet, will say, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”⁵⁰

Reader, will you be there? The loving Father desires your presence there; Jesus and the Holy Spirit are doing all they can to have you there; angels in heaven and Christians on earth are praying that you may be there; but you, and you alone, must make the decision. Will you decide to be there? Do so, and all things will be yours. Do so, and faith will give place to sight, prayer to praise, and the pledge of John three-sixteen will unfold into blissful reality. Till then “keep yourselves in the love of God,”⁵¹ remembering that —

⁴⁸ Rev. 21 : 23.

⁴⁹ Rev. 7 : 16.

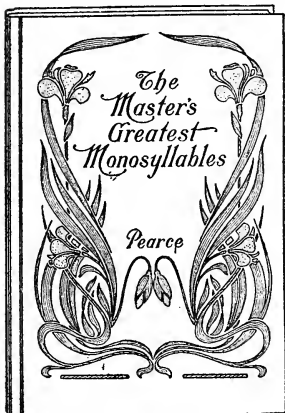
⁵⁰ Rev. 5 : 12.

⁵¹ Jude 21.

THE LOVER'S LOVE

- " *God's boundless love* and arching sky
Are o'er us when we wake or sleep,
Above us when we smile or weep,
Above us when we live or die.
- " *God's tireless love!* Beside the cot
Of her sick child the mother sleeps.
The Heavenly Father ever keeps
Unweary watch — He slumbers not.
- " *God's patient love!* Misunderstood
By hearts that suffer in the night;
Doubted, yet waiting till heaven's light
Shall show how all things work for good.
- " *God's mighty love!* On Calvary's height,
Suffering to save us from our sin,
To bring the heavenly kingdom in,
And fill our lives with joy and light.
- " *God's changeless love!* The wandering one
Forsakes, forgets, dishonors; yet
Repenting, going home, is met
With no reproach. 'Welcome, my son!'
- " *God's endless love!* What will it be
When earthly shadows flee away,
For all eternity's bright day
The unfolding of that love to see!"

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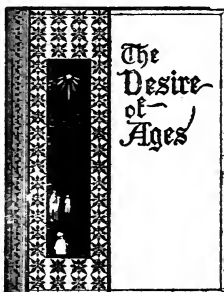
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